

There are many L.D.S. doctrines that can be proven to be in error when contrasted with the Bible. However, there are some issues that are more important than others. One example is pre-existence and salvation. What difference does it make if someone believes in pre-existence or not, if they are lost because of a belief in a false Christ and a false Gospel? Obviously, salvation is more important. I believe that the key issues should be the focal point before the minor issues when engaging in conversation concerning Mormon Doctrine.

The key issues are:

Was Joseph Smith a true prophet of God?

Does the L.D.S. church teach the truth about God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

Does the L.D.S. church teach the true Gospel?

The L.D.S. Standard Works

THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH

There are people who have made some remarkable predictions, yet they are not prophets of God. Nostradamus is credited for making some amazing predictions, and he did not claim to be a prophet of God. There are those that have claimed to be a prophet of God and have started a religion. Charles Taze Russell claimed to be a prophet of God; he founded the Jehovah's Witnesses church known today as the Watch Tower Society. The informed Mormon and Christian would agree that Russell was not a prophet of God, nor did he establish "the true church". What separates a true prophet of God from a false prophet, and is it important to distinguish the difference?

If a religion advocates that you follow a god other than the God of the Bible, it is a false religion (Deuteronomy 13:1-10). When we look to the Bible, we can soon learn how to distinguish a false prophet from a true prophet. We are also told why it is important to know the difference.

Matthew 7:21-23

"21) Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. 22) Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23) And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me.'"

In these verses we see that there are those who prophesy in Jesus' name, and even perform miracles in His name, but those things in and of themselves do not mean that they are from God!

Acts 3:22-23

“22) Moses said, ‘The Lord God shall raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed in everything He says to you. 23) And if shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.”

In this passage we can see why it would be important to distinguish a false prophet from a true one. It certainly does not sound wise to ignore what someone has to say, if they really are a prophet of God.

Deuteronomy 18:18-22

“18) I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19) And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. 20) But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. 21) And you may say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?’ 22) When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.”

In verses 18-19 we see that we should listen to a true prophet or answer to God for it.

In verses 21 and 22, we see that it is easy to tell the difference between a true prophet from a false one. If he is a true prophet and he tells us something about the future it will come to pass. There is no mention of any exceptions; one false prophecy makes a false prophet.

As we can see in verse 20, God does not take the matter of false prophets lightly. One might ask how God can judge the false prophet so harshly. The answer is because a false prophet is claiming that God said something that he knows God did not say. God Himself is the one that causes the prophecy to come true. Man, when he is involved, is only an instrument that God uses. Following is some Scripture that shows this.

Ezekiel 12:25

“For I the LORD shall speak, and whatever word I speak will be performed. It will no longer be delayed, for in your days, O rebellious house, I shall speak the word and perform it, declares the Lord GOD.”

Habakkuk 2:2-3

“Then the LORD answered me and said, ‘Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run. For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal, and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay.”

This Scripture shows that the Lord is the one that fulfills the prophecy and the fulfillment of it is certain. We know that God does not lie, and nothing is too hard for Him (Hebrews 6:18, Jeremiah 32:27).

L.D.S. scripture also tells us that the Lord fulfills the prophecy and the fulfillment is certain.

D&C 1:38

“What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.”

(PDF LDS Scripture pg. 570)

It is interesting to me that many Protestants will willingly enough put the prophecies of Joseph Smith to the test, yet many Mormons are not willing to do so either because they do not believe it is important, or they think it is wrong to do so. Following is a couple of statements from L.D.S. authors that show that it is important to establish that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God.

Bruce R. McConkie, **A New Witness for the Articles of Faith**, p.13

“Conversely, if Joseph Smith was not called of God, if he was a fraud and an impostor, if he was a false prophet — then Mormonism, as the restored gospel is often called, is itself a fraud and a delusion. In that event we as a people are in as dark, as benighted, and as fallen a state as the rest of mankind. And thus the issue is squarely put. Joseph Smith either was a prophet or he was not. He was either a revealer of Christ and God and their saving truths or he was not. His work on earth was either for good or for ill. There is no middle ground, no gray area, no room for compromise.”

Paul F. Royall, BYU Speeches, December 17, 1963, p.4

“Joseph Smith was either a prophet of God, or he was a fraud. There is no halfway mark about him. He was either what he claimed he was, or he was the greatest prevaricator that this world has ever known. I say that it is expedient for each of us to prove to ourselves whether he was a prophet or whether he was a fraud.”

Of course there are still those Mormons who say, “I already believe Joseph Smith was a prophet, so what need is there for me to put his prophecies to the test?” I say to them that the more I have studied even what I already believed, the more it has increased my faith. I can honestly say that my faith in God and His word has increased greatly by sharing this faith with people who have opposing views. The truth will endure all tests, and through opposition faith is strengthened. Take to heart what was said in the following L.D.S. Conference Report.

Bryant S. Hinckley, Conference Report, April 1939, p.62

“John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, and many others were given the opportunity, not only to prove their loyalty to the Prophet, but to prove their fidelity to the truth. These men were tried in the crucible of affliction. Spurgeon once said: ‘The great soldiers of the Cross have been gathered from the highlands of adversity.’ It was true in those early days of our history. Those people were winnowed and sifted by the winds of adversity, until nothing but the wheat was left.”

Next, we will examine three prophecies by Joseph Smith. Your job is to decide if he was a true or false prophet. If you decide that the prophecies are not false, then you must be able to explain how you can justify them as being true.

FALSE PROPHECIES

JOSEPH SMITH AND THE CIVIL WAR

First, I would like you to look at the Civil War prophecy carefully and see if it was intended to be divided into time frames of the (1) Civil War (2) World War 1&2
(3) The second coming of Christ.

This is the way the L.D.S authorities have interpreted it so that it was not a false prophecy. I suggest to you that interpreting this prophecy in such a manner is not being true to the context!

To help see the problem with this type of interpretation I have tried to mark where a time frame must take place for this to be true.

Date: December 25, 1832 **D&C 87:1-8** (PDF- L.D.S Scripture pg. 730)

1 Verily, **thus saith the Lord** concerning the wars that will shortly come to pass, **beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina**, which will eventually terminate in the death and misery of many souls; (Time Change)

2 And the time will come that **war will be poured out upon all nations**, (Time Change) beginning at this place.

3 For behold, the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States, and the Southern States will call on other nations, even the nation of Great Britain, as it is called, and they shall also call upon other nations, in order to defend themselves against other nations;(Time Change) **and then war shall be poured out upon all nations.** (Time Change)

4 And it shall come to pass, after many days, slaves shall rise up against their masters, who shall be marshaled and disciplined for war.

5 And it shall come to pass also that the remnants who are left of the land will marshal themselves, and shall become exceedingly angry, and shall vex the Gentiles with a sore vexation.

(Time Change)

6 And thus, with the sword and by bloodshed the inhabitants of the earth shall mourn; and with famine, and plague, and earthquake, and the thunder of heaven, and the fierce and vivid lightning also, shall the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God, until the consumption decreed hath made a full end of all nations;

7 That the cry of the saints, and of the blood of the saints, shall cease to come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, from the earth, to be avenged of their enemies.

8 Wherefore, stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come; for behold, it cometh quickly, **saith the Lord**. Amen.

To interpret this prophecy in the manner that the L.D.S authorities have explained to us, including World Wars I and II, we must change time frames at least six times in only eight verses. As you can see in verse 2 this must even take place in the middle of the sentence. Another thing to consider is the fact that although we call two of these wars “world wars” we would not say every nation was involved. How would you divide these eight verses to fit the L.D.S authority’s interpretation? Is it possible to do this and be true to the context? I don’t think so!

I cannot find any wording in the context of this passage that would suggest that it was intended to be interpreted in these time frames— if such words exist, can you show me which ones they are? How can you explain “time frame jumping” within one verse? Verse 1(a) addressed the Civil War; then the start of verse 2(b) jumps ahead to the World Wars, and (c) is back at the Civil War by the end of the verse.

The passage both begins and ends with "saith the Lord". Do you think this was intended to be a prophecy, or is it merely Joseph Smith's opinion?

According to verses 1 and 2, war was to be “poured out on all nations”, beginning at what place?

Did this happen in the Civil War time period?

If you are true to the context, when should there be a “full end to all nations”?

Is this a true or false prophecy? How should you respond according to the Bible (Deuteronomy 18:18-22)?

Herber Kimball, a member of the first presidency, made the following statement (keep in mind that the Civil War took place from 1861-1865):

Journal of Discourses, Vol. 9, pgs.54-55, (PDF pg. 62-63)

Heber C. Kimball, April 14, 1861

“There are many good books for you to read, and that are full of good instruction. Here are the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and Book of Doctrine and Covenants. You will see many revelations in the last-named book that are already fulfilled, and there are others that are still in the future. The Almighty through his Prophets foretold that the nation would make war upon this people and that he would come out of his hiding place, and pour out his judgments upon those that rebel against him, and who persecuted his people, and set themselves against his house. Then it shall go forth like a mighty whirlwind upon the face of the whole earth. **In this country the North and the South will exert themselves against each other, and ere long the whole face of the United States will be in commotion, fighting one against another, and they will destroy their nationality.** They have never done anything for this people, and I don't believe they ever will. I have never prayed for the destruction of this Government, but I know that dissolution, sorrow, weeping, and distress are in store for the inhabitants of the United States, because of their conduct towards the people of God. Then the judgments will go forth to the nations of the earth. I have an understanding of these things, and I sincerely hope that you comprehend as clearly as I do. If you do, you will strive to prepare for those things that are coming upon the earth in these last days.”

Does it sound like Herber Kimball understood that the Civil War prophecy was to be fulfilled at that time, when he said "and they will destroy their nationality"?

Even if you interpret this prophecy as something that was to take place during one time period, as I believe it was intended (making it a false prophecy) one will still wonder about the parts of the prophecy that did come true. I am referring to the fact that the Civil War did take place, and it did begin in South Carolina. How could Joseph Smith have known that before it happened? It might not be as amazing as you think if you look at what was happening in history at the time of his prophecy.

Tension between the North and the South was bad enough that John Quincy Adams (then Secretary of State) predicted the Civil War twelve years earlier than Joseph Smith did. The following can be found in the L.D.S. Collectors Library under the bonus title:

American History; An Apprehensive View of the Missouri Compromise.

AUTHOR: Thomas Jefferson DATE: 1820

SOURCE: America, Vol.5, pg.305

[THE Missouri Compromise was the first of the great measures that followed the spirit of mutual accommodation found in the Constitution itself. It was an arrangement between the free and slave States, embodied in an Act of Congress approved March 6, 1820, which provided for the admission of Missouri into the Union as a slave State, but which prohibited slavery in all other Louisiana territory north of the southern boundary line of Missouri.

Jefferson betrays both apprehension and alarm for the future of the Union, in these three letters written in 1820. It is the Southern view of a lukewarm slave holder. Following it is the Northern view taken from the journal of **John Quincy Adams**, then (1820) Secretary of State. His prophecy of civil war, in the third paragraph, was fulfilled in 1861. Niles, whose moderate view follows, founded (1815) and edited Niles' Weekly Register, the files of which are an invaluable record of contemporary events.] (end quote)

Still, this leaves the fact that Joseph Smith stated that the rebellion would begin in South Carolina. This is what a lot of people would have expected at that time. Before Joseph Smith's prophecy Congress passed a tariff act that South Carolina refused to accept, and President Andrew Jackson alerted the troops to be ready for war. The following can be found in the L.D.S. Collectors Library (bonus title).

History of the American People, Vol.4, pgs .36-37

"The election over, General Jackson once more chosen, her party ties broken, her principles of opposition still unsanctioned and untested, South Carolina proceeded with her radical program of redress. **On the 24th of November (1832)** a state convention, summoned for the purpose and formed upon the model of a constitutional convention, adopted and promulgated a formal Ordinance of Nullification, which declared the tariff Acts of 1828 and 1832 null and void and without force of law within the jurisdiction of South Carolina, and gave solemn warning to the rest of the country that any attempt on the part of the federal government to enforce the nullified laws within her limits would sever South Carolina's connection with the Union and force her to organize a separate government. The legislature of the State immediately took steps looking towards a resumption of some of the powers before formally surrendered to the Union, and provided for putting the State in readiness to resist coercion by force of arms. Mr. Hayne was recalled from Washington to become governor of the State; and Mr. Calhoun resigned the vice presidency to take his place upon the floor of the Senate, that he might, there contest every inch of the ground in debate."

In summary, the Civil War prophecy by Joseph Smith did not come true. War was not poured out on all nations, beginning at South Carolina. There also was not an end to all nations. The part that Joseph Smith did get right was common knowledge to the people at that time.

THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH and the MISSOURI TEMPLE

Let's start by examining just what Joseph Smith prophesied concerning the temple in the western boundaries of Missouri.

Date: September 22 and 23, 1832

Place: Kirtland, Ohio

To: Joseph Smith and Six Elders

D&C 84:1-5 (PDF L.D.S Scripture pg. 719)

“1) **A revelation of Jesus Christ unto his servant Joseph Smith, Jun.**, and six elders, as they united their hearts and lifted their voices on high.

2) Yea, the word of the Lord concerning his church, established in the last days for the restoration of his people, as he has spoken by the mouth of his prophets, and for the gathering of his saints to stand upon Mount Zion, which shall be the city of New Jerusalem.

3) **Which city shall be built, beginning at the temple lot, which is appointed by the finger of the Lord, in the western boundaries of the State of Missouri, and dedicated by the hand of Joseph Smith, Jun.**, and others with whom the Lord was well pleased.

4) Verily this is the word of the Lord that the city New Jerusalem shall be built by the gathering of the saints, beginning at this place, even the place of the temple, which temple shall be reared in this generation.

5) For verily this generation shall not all pass away until an house shall be built unto the Lord, and a cloud shall rest upon it, which cloud shall be even the glory of the Lord, which shall fill the house.”

Questions about D&C 84:1-5

Verse 1. Through what man did this prophecy come?

Verse 2. Was this intended to be just a hope of Joseph Smith's, or was it to be a word from the Lord?

Verse 3. Where was this city and temple to be built, and by whose hand will it be dedicated?

Verse 4. When was this city and temple to be built?

Verse 5. This prophecy was given in 1832; was it that generation that “should not all pass away” until the city and temple were to be built in western Missouri and dedicated by the Hand of Joseph Smith? If this is not the correct interpretation, where in the text do you see a change in time frames? There was not a city or temple built in that generation in western Missouri. Does this make it a false prophecy, according to Deuteronomy 18:18-22?

This is a question that the Tenth President Joseph Fielding Smith addressed:

Answers to Gospel Questions, Vol.4, p.112

"It may be reasonable to assume that in giving this revelation to the Prophet the Lord did have in mind the generation of people who would still be living within the one hundred years from the time of the announcement of the revelation, and that they would enjoy the blessings of the temple, and a glorious cloud would rest upon it. It is also reasonable to believe that no soul living in 1832 is still living in morality on the earth. Notwithstanding this there is nothing in the commandment given to Nephi, neither in his assurance that the Lord would bless him in obtaining the plates that were so essential to the welfare spiritually and temporally of the descendants of Nephi, that in any sense is in conflict with the commandment or promise that was made by the Lord in the revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith. We read in another revelation given to the Church in January 1841, where the Lord absolves the members of the Church from the obligation of building the temple, in the following words

‘A REVELATION FROM THE LORD (D&C 124:49-50)

‘Verily, verily I say unto you that when I give a commandment to any of the sons of men to do work unto my name, and those sons of men go with all their might and with all they have to perform that work, and cease not their diligence, and their enemies come upon them and hinder them from performing that work, behold, it behooveth me to require that work no more at the hands of those sons of men, but to accept of their offerings.

‘And the iniquity and transgressions of my holy laws and commandments I will visit upon the heads of those who hinder my work unto the third and fourth generation, so long as they repent not, and hate me, saith the Lord.

‘Therefore, for this cause have I accepted the offerings of those whom I commanded to build up a city and a house unto my name, in Jackson county, Missouri, and were hindered by their enemies, saith the Lord your God.

‘And I will answer judgment, wrath, and indignation, wailing and anguish, and gnashing of teeth upon their heads, unto the third and fourth generation, so long as they repent not, and hate me, saith the Lord your God. And this, I make an example unto you, for your consolation concerning all those who have been commanded to do a work and have been hindered by the hands of their enemies, and by oppression, saith the Lord your God.

‘For I am the Lord your God, and will save all those of your brethren who have been pure in heart, and have been slain in the land of Missouri, saith the Lord.’” (End Quote)

There are a few problems with this prophecy that this president quoted (D&C 124:49-54) or (L.D.S- Scripture PDF pg. 815-816) which should be addressed.

First, this is said as a word from the Lord that was relayed to us by Joseph Smith on January 19, 1841, in Nauvoo, Illinois. The original prophecy concerning the Temple that was to be built in the western part of Missouri took place in September, 1832 — nine years earlier. By this time Joseph Smith was very well aware of the fact that he could not go to Missouri, and certainly he could not build a city and a temple there. This “prophecy” appears to be a message of convenience, a way to get Joseph Smith “off the hook” with those who would still inquire about when they would go to Missouri to build the city and temple.

There is a strong contrast between this message, which excuses them for not building the temple because they tried with all of their might but were hindered, and what Joseph Smith's friend believed when only three years had elapsed since his prophecy.

John Whitmer is one of the eight witnesses who are mentioned in the preface of the Book of Mormon. The following can be found in a Mormon publication he authored.

Messenger and Advocate (Sept. 1835) (PDF pg. 194)

“Cleanliness”, by John Whitmer; pg. 189

“The Lord has said that he would hold no one guilty, that should go with an open heart, up to the land of Zion; after five years from September, 1831. And the Lord has said that he would gather his people and specified the place where:[D&C 84:1-4] A revelation of Jesus Christ unto his servant Joseph Smith Jr. and six elders, as they united their heart and lifted their voices on high; yea, the word of the Lord concerning his church established in the last days for the gathering of his saints to stand upon mount Zion, which shall be built, beginning at the Temple Lot, which is appointed by the finger of the Lord, in the western boundaries of the State of Missouri, and dedicated by the hand of Joseph Smith jr. and others, with whom the Lord was well pleased.

‘Verily, this is the word of the Lord, that the city New Jerusalem shall be built by the gathering of the saints, beginning at this place, even the place of the temple, which temple shall be reared in this generation; for verily this generation shall not all pass away until an house shall be built unto the Lord and a cloud shall rest upon it, which cloud shall be even the glory of the Lord, which shall fill the house (Cov. Sec. IV. Par. I.). Isaiah 66:18 For I know thier works and thier thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory”

According to this quotation the glory of the Lord shall appear; but they must come to a certain place in order that they can see it. Our former quotation determines the place, and who dare dispute it? The Lord has said by the mouth of Isaiah; that he would perform his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act." (End Quote)

At this point it was still believed that the temple would be built during that generation and dedicated by the hand of Joseph Smith. More important is the contrast between the nature of the God in D&C 124: 49-54 and the God mentioned in the Bible. The God we learn of in the Bible declares that He Himself will see to it that His prophets' prophecies will come to pass, and nothing is too hard for Him. Scripture previously quoted showing this included Ezekiel 12:12-25, Habakkuk 2:2-3, Hebrews 6:18, and Jeremiah 32:27; also, D&C 1:38

In contrast the God we learn of in D&C 124 excuses the people for not fulfilling the prophecy Joseph Smith gave concerning the building of the temple, because they tried with all of their might (verse 49). I ask you by whose power a prophecy is fulfilled; is it by God's power, or man's? Does your answer line up with what the Bible says? (References above)

The passage quoted in D&C 124:49-54 conflicts with the nature of God presented in the Bible. In the Bible we are told how to identify a false prophet. The test, we are told, is that if a prophet tells us of future events and they do not come to pass, the prophet is false. The only exception we are ever given in the Bible concerns when coming judgment is stopped due to repentance; Jonah and Nineveh would be examples of this. D&C says that although the prophecy did not come to pass, the people are excused because they tried with all of their might but were hindered by the enemy.

It is not reasonable to accept Joseph Smith's word for what Smith says the Lord said in D&C 124:49-54, when Smith has already proven to be a false prophet, according to the Bible. This section in D&C was clearly a prophecy of convenience for Joseph Smith; he was trying to conceal his own false prophecy with another so-called word from the Lord. It only takes one false prophecy to become a false prophet.

THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH and the 56 YEARS

History of the Church, Vol.2, Ch.13, pg.181 (PDF pg. 957)
Kirtland, February 14, 1835—

“This day, a meeting was called of those who journeyed last season to Zion for the purpose of laying the foundation of its redemption, together with as many other of the brethren and sisters as were disposed to attend.

“President Joseph Smith, Jun., presiding, read the 15th chapter of John, and said: Let us endeavor to solemnize our minds that we may receive a blessing, by calling on the Lord. After an appropriate and affecting prayer, the brethren who went to Zion [in Zion's camp] were requested to take their seats together in a part of the house by themselves.

“President Smith then stated that the meeting had been called, because God had commanded it; and it was made known to him by vision and by the Holy Spirit. He then gave a relation of some of the circumstances attending us while journeying to Zion— our trials, sufferings; and said God had not designed all this for nothing, but He had it in remembrance yet; and it was the will of God that those who went to zion, with a determination to lay down their lives, if necessary, should be ordained to the ministry, and go forth to prune the vineyard for the last time, or the coming of the Lord, which was nigh-- even fifty-six years should wind up the scene.

“The President also said many things; such as the weak things, even the smallest and weakest among us, shall be powerful and mighty, and great things shall be accomplished by you from this hour; and you shall begin to feel the whisperings of the Spirit of God; and the work of God shall begin to break forth from this time; and you shall be endowed with power from on high.” (end quote)

In this text we can see that Joseph Smith was the one leading this meeting and the quotes in this section are things he said. We also learn that God has called the meeting, and the things mentioned in the meeting are not just an opinion or estimation. Rather the things mentioned in the meeting were made known to Smith by revelation and by the Holy Spirit. We learn that the people who went to Zion were in the meeting. We learn that the people who went to Zion were the ones who were to go and prune the vineyard for the last time. We learn that the pruning of the vineyard (or the coming of the Lord) should come about within fifty-six years.

Collected Discourses, Vol.5, Francis M. Lyman,

April 5, 1896

“On that day also, the Prophet announced that they were to be called into the ministry and to go forth to prune the vineyard for the last time, ‘for the coming of the Lord, which is nigh, even fifty-six years should wind up the scene.’ The harvest was ripe, and the laborers were few, and they were to cast in their might and their labors for the accomplishment of the purposes of the Lord; and he announced, at that time, that in fifty-six years the scene should be wound up, that some scene was to be wound up in 1891 —fifty-six years added to 1835. And thus many of the older brethren were expecting to discover something in 1891 that perhaps it has been felt has not been accomplished.

“ **In the culmination of these events we recognize the fulfillment of the prediction of the Prophet Joseph Smith, that about 1890 or 1891, the scene would change, and the conditions that had existed from those early days of persecutions and troubles should be wound up and cease forever.** The Prophets Brigham Young and John Taylor laid down their lives while carrying forward the great work, though it was not their good fortune to witness the relief and the independence and the measure of sovereignty of statehood that the people of this state enjoy today. But after that time when the Lord had indicated that the scene should change, and the winding up of the conditions that had formerly existed, from that time till now, everything has moved in harmony with the directions and counsels of the Lord through His servants. Think of the change of feeling from hostility to friendliness in the people of the United States toward the people of this state. We not only have the governor and judges of our own choice, and courts organized here in this state, but we have our senators in congress, and our representative, and they are as honored and equally influential as are those of any other state in the Union; and the Lord has magnified His people and verified the prophesy of His servant Joseph in regard to this great change. Is it not clear that the inspiration in the Prophet Joseph at that time indicated and pointed to the conditions that we see today? The scene is changed, and it has changed to remain, and will never return to the old conditions again.” (end quote)

After reading what Joseph Smith said in the meeting, and a related passage by Lyman, some logical questions come to mind:

The meeting was commanded by God and the contents of the meeting were made known to Joseph Smith by revelation and by the Holy Spirit. Considering this, and the fact that Francis M. Lyman called this a “prophecy”, why shouldn't we view it as such? Was there anything in the context of what Joseph Smith said in the meeting to justify Lyman's interpretation of the fifty-six years as being a change in persecution and political parties,

How can the fifty-six years be taken as only an “opinion” when the text says these things were made known to Joseph Smith by revelation and by the Holy Spirit?

Isn't the "pruning of the vineyard for the last time" a reference to the harvesting of souls, similar to what Jesus said in Matthew 9:37-38 and 13:36-39? If so, why would the harvest be for the last time unless the Lord was expected to return? Is this harvest still taking place today?

Joseph Smith did make other statements on other occasions that seem contrary to his prophecy that Christ should return in fifty-six years. This does not change the fact that in the meeting held on February 14, 1835, Joseph Smith did say that the pruning of the vineyard and the coming of the Lord should be wound up in fifty-six years. This was supposedly made known to him by revelation, and by the Holy Spirit.

Joseph Smith prophesied the return of Christ within fifty-six years.
(History of the Church Vol.2, Ch.13, pgs.181-182.)E7 (PDF pg. 957)

Joseph Smith said, "I prophesy in the name of the Lord God, and let it be written — the Son of Man will not come in the clouds of heaven till I am eighty-five years old."
(History of the Church, Vol.5, Ch.17, pg.336.) (PDF pg. 2864)

Joseph Smith said after praying to know when Christ would return, he heard a voice; and after hearing it he said, "I was left thus, without being able to decide whether this coming referred to the beginning of the millennium or to some previous appearing, or whether I should die and thus see His face. "
(History of the Church, Vol.5, Ch.17, pg.324.) (PDF pg. 2854)

Joseph Smith said, "Jesus Christ never did reveal to any man the precise time that He would come. Go and read the Scriptures, and you cannot find anything that specifies the exact hour He would come; and all that say so are false teachers."
(History of the Church, Vol. 6, Ch.10, pg.254.) (PDF pg. 2317)

How can these four statements be reconciled? They are contradictory, and from a man who claims he is relaying God's word to us. Considering the facts; it is not reasonable to accept Smith as a prophet of God.

When looking at statements by Joseph Smith as historical documents, it is helpful to know how those around him understood what he meant. Following are some sources that show that those who listened to and believed Joseph Smith fully expected to see Christ return in their lifetime.

History of the Church, Vol. 1, pg.176, Footnotes (PDF pg. 421)

“In addition to the spiritual manifestations already mentioned as having occurred at this conference of June 3rd-6th it should be said that according to John Whitmer's History of the Church (ch. v): **‘The Spirit of the Lord fell upon Joseph in an unusual manner, and he prophesied** that John the Revelator was then among the Ten Tribes of Israel who had been led away by Shalmaneser king of Assyria to prepare them for their return from their long dispersion to again possess the land of their fathers. He prophesied many more things that I have not written After he had prophesied, he laid his hands upon Lyman Wight and ordained him to the High Priesthood (i.e. ordained him a High Priest), after the holy order of God. And the Spirit fell upon Lyman and he prophesied concerning the coming of Christ. He said that there were some in the congregation that should live until the Savior should descend from heaven with a shout, with all the holy angels with Him.”

Soon after Joseph Smith ordained Lyman Wight to the office of High Priest, Lyman prophesied that some people there would be alive when Christ returned. Why is there no record of Joseph Smith rebuking him, since Smith had already declared that “no man knows when Jesus will return”? Lyman Wight gave a false prophecy right after the Spirit of the Lord fell upon Joseph Smith and Smith ordained Lyman a High Priest.

History of the Church, Vol.1, Ch.23, pg.323 (PDF pg. 277)

"I asked of him a father's blessing, which he granted by laying his hands upon my head, in the name of Jesus Christ, and declaring that I should continue in the Priest's office until Christ comes."

The blessing was that this man should continue in the Priest's office until Christ comes. If this continuation of the Priest's office still holds after his death, why does it end upon the return of Christ? Or could it be that it was believed that this man would live until the return of Christ, due to Joseph Smith's prophecy?

History of the Church, Vol.2, Ch.13, pgs. 186-189 (PDF pg. 960)

“President Joseph Smith, Jun., said that the first business of the meeting was, for the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon, to pray, each one, and then proceed to choose twelve men from the Church, as Apostles, to go to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people. The Three Witnesses were then blessed by the laying on of the hands of the Presidency. The Witnesses then, according to a former commandment, proceeded to make choice of the Twelve. Their names are as follows:

1, Lyman E. Johnson 2. Brigham Young 3. Heber C. Kimball 4. Orson Hyde
5. David W. Patten 6. Luke S. Johnson 7. William E. M'Lellin 8. John F. Boynton
9. Orson Pratt 10. William Smith 11. Thomas P. Marsh 12. Parley P. Pratt

“Lyman E. Johnson, Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball came forward; and the Three Witnesses laid their hands upon each one's head and prayed, separately.

“The blessing of Lyman E. Johnson was, in the name of Jesus Christ, that he should bear the tidings of salvation to nations, tongues, and people, until the utmost corners of the earth shall hear the tidings; and that he shall be a witness of the things of God to nations and tongues, and that holy angels shall administer to him occasionally; and that no power of the enemy shall prevent him from going forth and doing the work of the Lord; and **that he shall live until the gathering is accomplished, according to the holy prophets; and he shall be like unto Enoch; and his faith shall be like unto his; and he shall be called great among all the living; and Satan shall tremble before him; and **he shall see the Savior come and stand upon the earth with power and great glory.** “**

.....”**Heber C. Kimball's blessing was**, in substance, that he shall be made like unto those who have been blessed before him; and be favored with the same blessing. That he might receive visions; the ministration of angels, and hear their voice; and even come into the presence of God; that many millions may be converted by his instrumentality; that angels may waft him from place to place, and that he may stand unto the coming of our Lord, and receive a crown in the Kingdom of our God; that he be made acquainted with the day when Christ shall come; that he shall be made perfect in faith; and that the deaf shall hear, the lame shall walk, the blind shall see, and greater things than these shall he do; that he shall have boldness of speech before the nations, and great power.”. (End Quote)

Again, in this quote, we see that Joseph Smith is present when the Lord's work is taking place and Heber C. Kimball and Lyman E. Johnson both said they would live to see the Second Coming of Christ. How can we possibly say that Joseph Smith did not put a date to the return of Christ? Certainly, those who were close to him believed they would be alive when Christ returned. By Joseph Smith's own words, this makes him a false teacher.

History of the Church, Vol.6, Ch.10, pg.254 (PDF pg. 2317)

“Jesus Christ never did reveal to any man the precise time that He would come. Go and read the Scriptures, and you cannot find anything that specifies the exact hour He would come; and all that say so are false teachers.”

So far, we can conclude that Joseph Smith did indeed prophesy the return of Christ within fifty- six years. Some of those who were close to him believed they would also live to see the return of Christ. These events were recorded supposedly while doing the Lord's work. Joseph Smith also made contradictory statements that cannot be reconciled.

Robert A. Morey wrote book entitled How to Answer a Mormon; the majority of this 119- page book concerns false prophecies by Joseph Smith. I only mentioned three here. Remember, it only takes one false prophecy to be a false prophet. The most thorough book I ever seen is Mormonism Shadow or Reality by Sandra and Jerald Tanner. <http://utlm.org/>