Doctrine and Covenants 1

Verse 38: What is the rhetorical effect of saying, “What I have spoken, I have spoken.” The sentence is obviously true, but presumably the Lord puts it that way for a reason. What might be his reason?

What does the Lord mean when he says, “I excuse not myself”? When and how do we excuse ourselves? Is he telling us that he is not doing what we do when we excuse ourselves?

The structure of this sentence is somewhat odd. We usually read “whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” to qualify “what I the Lord have spoken”: he has spoken what he has spoken, and it doesn’t matter whether he spoke it in person or through his servants. But grammatically the concluding clause of this verse appears to modify “my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled.” How would you explain that?

Doctrine and Covenants 21

Verses 4–5: To whom does the word his in “thou shalt give heed unto all his words” refer? Does it have a grammatical antecedent, or do we have to assume one?
Does “walking in all holiness before me” describe the seer, translator, prophet, apostle, and elder of verse 1: he will give us the words of the Lord walking in all holiness? Or does it describe those to whom this commandment is delivered: we ought to receive those words and commandments walking in all holiness?

**Verse 6:** Can you explain the metaphor “the gates of hell”? The phrase originates in Jesus’s teaching (Matthew 16:18; 3 Nephi 11:39, though Nephi also uses the term in his psalm—2 Nephi 4:32). As Jesus used the term, it seems to mean “the power of death”: the gates of hell stand for hell as a whole, and hell did not mean a place of punishment so much as it meant death when Jesus spoke to Peter. Once a term becomes part of scripture and gets repeated, though, its meaning can change. Is its meaning here the same as it is in Jesus’s usage?

If the meaning here is the same as in Matthew 16:18 and 3 Nephi 11:39, what does it mean to say that if we do the things commanded, the power of death will not prevail against us? What kind of death was Jesus speaking of when he spoke to Peter? What kind of death is he referring to here?

Note: We understand the word *disperse* to mean “to spread out over a wide area.” But Webster’s 1828 dictionary tells us that in Joseph Smith’s day it meant “to scatter; to drive asunder; to cause to separate into different parts” more than it meant “to distribute.”

What does it mean for “the heavens to shake for [our] good”? What is the image that the Lord is using here?
Doctrine and Covenants 28

Verse 2: How did Moses receive commandments? Do all prophets receive commandments as Moses did? How do you explain your answer?

Verse 3: How was Aaron obedient to Moses? In other words, what does this comparison of Oliver Cowdery to Aaron teach us?

Verses 4–5: What authority do these verses give Oliver? Is there anyone in the Church today who has a position (and authority) like his?

Verses 6–7: What are “the mysteries”? The New Testament uses the word often, and there it translates a Greek word that could also be translated “secret” or “secret ordinance.” What are the secrets of the gospel? From whom are they kept secret, and why are they secret? How do we learn them? What are its secret ordinances? Where do we learn them? Why are they secret?

Doctrine and Covenants 43

Verses 2–3: Why does the Lord say that Joseph Smith has been appointed to receive commandments and revelations from the Lord’s hand rather than from his mouth?

What does it mean to abide (“to rest or dwell; to tarry or stay for a short time; to continue permanently; to be firm and immovable”—Webster’s 1828 dictionary) in the Lord? How do we know whether the prophet is doing this?
Doctrine and Covenants 112

Verse 20: What does it mean to say that the Lord has made the First Presidency counselors to us?