

Episode 19

Mormon Identity

FORTUNATE FALL

[BEGIN MUSIC]

NARRATOR: Welcome to Mormon Identity, a 30 minute talk radio program that addresses church topics important to the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our host is Robert L. Millet professor of Religious Education at Brigham Young University.

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ROBERT MILLET: We welcome you once again to Mormon Identity. I'm Bob Millet a member of the faculty of Religious Education at BYU. I'm joined today by friend and colleague Dan Judd, a member of the Ancient Scripture faculty at BYU. Dan, welcome.

DANIEL JUDD: Very happy to be with you Bob. Thanks for inviting me.

ROBERT MILLET: You bet. Today we want to talk about the doctrine of the Fall, more particularly the distinctive LDS notion of a "fortunate fall". The world, the Christian world in general has a view of the Fall and I suppose we share many things with them, but there are some things we have distinctive differences on doctrinally and we want to talk about that a bit today. You know, Dan I remember many years ago being on a Know Your Religion circuit through Texas and several towns in Texas, so I was gone about a week or two and driving during the day trying to stay awake and finally turn on the radio, turned on the radio to keep me awake and found a religious channel. A minister was taking phone calls from people around the country and one of the callers asked this question. "Reverend, why did Adam and Eve take the fruit in the garden of Eden?" And his response really kept me awake, he said, "I don't know!" he said, "That was the dumbest thing anyone could have ever done!"

DANIEL JUDD: [LAUGHING]

ROBERT MILLET: "If they hadn't done that we would all be in Paradise today!" You know that answer, I said it kept me awake, it caused me to do some serious thinking, but as I reflected it seemed that that probably is the view of many traditional Christians today. What do you think?

DANIEL JUDD: I had a similar experience, years ago living in Michigan. We had just had our fourth child and I had a wonderful friend, not a member of our faith that was keeping in touch with us and how our family was doing and I told him one day, "We had the baby!" And he said, "Oh what did you name him?" And I said, "We named him Adam." And it just went dead quiet and he said, "*You named him Adam?!?*"

ROBERT MILLET: [LAUGHING] You might as well have named him Judas!

DANIEL JUDD: Well, he said Lucifer actually!

ROBERT MILLET: Did he *really*? [LAUGHTER] Oh my!

DANIEL JUDD: And I had known other people's views of the Fall, but I didn't know that it went quite that deep.

ROBERT MILLET: Wow!

DANIEL JUDD: And so, you're exactly right. It a, we're one of the few groups, religions that I know of that have a view of the Fall as being a part of God's plan. We'll call it today "The Fortunate Fall."

ROBERT MILLET: Mm-hm. Yeah, it's a, it's a fascinating thing. I read a book years ago by Erich Fromm, the noted psychoanalyst who was probably best known for his book *The Art of Loving*.

DANIEL JUDD: Right.

ROBERT MILLET: But this book, a little less well-known was quite fascinating. The title got my attention; the title of the book was *Ye Shall be as Gods*. And what it was, is it was a treatment of Adam and Eve in the garden and of their willful rebellion and of their effort to grab for power and that to take over God's throne as the first, the initial effort on the part of mankind to go beyond their bounds and that's what the whole book was about. And it, that caused me again to open my eyes and say "Wow!" we really do have a rather distinctive view.

DANIEL JUDD: You know Bob in some ways I have some sympathy for people like Erich Fromm and others who, you know they have the Bible, they have their philosophy and what they don't have is 2 Nephi Chapter 2. What they don't have is a restoration of plain and precious principles or truths.

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah, I think about that a great deal, that I'll find myself sitting in a conversation and realize, "I think I understand this but I don't know why they don't understand it." When it occurs to me, "Well, because you have the Book of Mormon."

DANIEL JUDD: Right

ROBERT MILLET: You have the Doctrine and Covenants, you have Latter-day revelation. And those things just make a *real* difference. And so I think when we ponder on the nature of the Fall and its effect, while we agree with many of the things they would teach, other Christian groups, we certainly have our differences. Where do, where do you suppose most Christians get the ideas they have from? What is it that has caused them to believe, other than Genesis, the early chapters of Genesis, the fall of Adam and Eve, theologically where do they turn?

DANIEL JUDD: You know as I have read quite extensively the writings of the ancient Christian fathers, Augustine, many, many of them for the most part these were, these were good men...

ROBERT MILLET: I think they were too.

DANIEL JUDD: They were really trying to understand the world around them and their theology.

ROBERT MILLET: And trying to hold a faith together!

DANIEL JUDD: Oh, oh especially, yes indeed, the early part of the Christian church, beginning of the Christian church; I should say, after Christ's time. And yet we really can focus on St. Augustine principally and his views about the Fall. I personally think we're very linked to some of his own demons that he was facing. I mean even his own, his own writings, I know you've read *Confessions*, by St. Augustine and a very candid, a very real description of his own, his own troubles that he's, that he dealt with. And so I think that a lot of it...

ROBERT MILLET: So his theology you're saying maybe is autobiographical as anything.

DANIEL JUDD: It's an expression of his own, his own problems, his own challenges and really, his conversion coming to Christ was a, was just a, a beautiful account, but even with that he still faced many of these same challenges that he had before. And, for example, he had a very positive view of free will for awhile after his conversion, he...

ROBERT MILLET: Yes, yes.

DANIEL JUDD: That man does have the ability to overcome his fallen condition. But then he continued to have some of those same problems. And even Martin Luther...

ROBERT MILLET: Wrestling with the same things.

DANIEL JUDD: Frankly, a wonderful man but he had some serious challenges.

ROBERT MILLET: What's important I think about what you're saying, Dan, is that a large percentage of Christian thinkers throughout the world derived their thinking not just from the Bible and their theology not from the Bible alone, but also from St. Augustine.

DANIEL JUDD: That's right.

ROBERT MILLET: He plays such a central role in both Catholic and Protestant thought. Often people will take their thinking back to this, to this, to this, and then to St. Augustine.

DANIEL JUDD: Exactly right.

ROBERT MILLET: And so we'll talk more about this matter of the Fall and its effect upon us and the distinctive Latter-day Saint insight into the Fall. We'll be right back.

[PAUSE]

ROBERT MILLET: Welcome back to Mormon Identity, I'm Bob Millet and I'm joined by my colleague Professor Daniel Judd from the department of Ancient Scripture. Dan, we've been talking about this matter of the fall of Adam and Eve and how that fall is viewed by traditional Christians. We made some mention of St. Augustine and his impact upon religious theology in the last several hundred years. Now, what are some of the results of the Fall as far as the most traditional Christians are concerned? What do you think, what do they see comes because of the Fall?

DANIEL JUDD: You know when a Latter-day Saint hears the phrase "original sin", in my experience they typically go back to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden partaking of the fruit. And that certainly includes original sin from a traditional Christian perspective, but there's so much more to it, from different views. Others, both Catholics and

Protestants have the idea that when Adam and Eve partook of the fruit, yes indeed that was the original sin, but that sin extended to all of their posterity for all time.

ROBERT MILLET: So the posterity of Adam and Eve have a taint or a sin entailed upon them because of what Adam and Eve did.

DANIEL JUDD: And so, exactly, and so if, when a child is born, a child is born with Adam's sin within them and upon them and so they are depraved even, not just from birth but from conception.

ROBERT MILLET: From conception.

DANIEL JUDD: That's right.

ROBERT MILLET: Very interesting concept, which leads automatically to the idea that developed within the first few centuries of the Christian church of the need to baptize those children as early as possible lest they die with that sin upon them, right?

DANIEL JUDD: That's right. That's exactly where the doctrine comes from. That's the very issue that we're discussing.

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah, and it's very interesting, I've often wondered what difference it would make if the world simply understood the great truth that was revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith as a part of his inspired translation of the Bible, the Book of Moses.

Where the Lord says to Adam, "I have forgiven thee thy transgression in the Garden of Eden." Moses, chapter 6. My goodness what a difference that would make, because as you're suggesting, most of the Christian world believes that the responsibility, the accountability for and the effects of everything Adam and Eve did are answered upon you and me.

DANIEL JUDD: You know you actually have two views in the literature out there and of course you have, you have Augustine's views and those that have come from his perspective, but then you have the other extreme view, too. Pelagius would be one of those early Christian fathers that had the opposite view that Adam's fall and Eve's fall had no effect upon their posterity. And Latter-day Saints we would reject both of those extremes.

ROBERT MILLET: Well, you'd have great trouble reading the Book of Mormon and not seeing the effect of the Fall.

DANIEL JUDD: Yeah, we're not born evil, but we're certainly born fallen.

ROBERT MILLET: And it's a very interesting distinction, Dan, I'm reminded how many times in the Book of Mormon some such things are mentioned. Here's Lehi, actually Nephi quoting his father Lehi, "Six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up... even a Messiah", and then he went on to say, "All mankind were in a lost and in a fallen state, and ever would be save they should rely on this Redeemer." And that idea, which is just a recurring theme in the Book of Mormon that the Fall was real; even though we take a more optimistic view, it was real and it does take a measured toll. Or this one from Lehi to Jacob in 2 Nephi 2, "He showed unto all men that they were lost, because of the transgression of their parents." Now that may prove a bit problematic for some Latter-

day Saints because we have an Article of Faith that says, “Men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam’s transgression.” But I think, I think what we’re talking about here is, it isn’t, it’s one thing to say, “I’m not responsible for what Adam and Eve did”, “I’m not cursed for what Adam and Eve did”, but it would be wrong to say “I’m not affected by what Adam and Eve did”. Does that make sense?

DANIEL JUDD: Oh yeah. Yeah. In fact in Moroni, where is it, 8 and 8 where it says the curse of Adam is removed.

ROBERT MILLET: “Taken from them in me”

DANIEL JUDD: That’s right! And so, there was an effect, and it still is powerful. Now children have a special dispensation.

ROBERT MILLET: That’s right, those before the age of accountability.

DANIEL JUDD: That’s right. And Joseph Smith, again in the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis, he made mentioned even eight years of age.

ROBERT MILLET: That’s right Genesis 17.

DANIEL JUDD: Right. And so before that they are not allowed to be tempted by the adversary, but a child is still fallen.

ROBERT MILLET: That’s right.

DANIEL JUDD: I have grandchildren and so do you. [LAUGHTER]

ROBERT MILLET: You know it really does get at the question Dan, when you think about it, of we know the scriptures teach children are innocent.

DANIEL JUDD: Right, 93:38

ROBERT MILLET: No question about that. The children are innocent. But the real question is why are they innocent? And you know you have a rather humanistic notion, “They’re innocent because they’re just that way by nature. They’re just good and...”

DANIEL JUDD: Virtuous

ROBERT MILLET: ...virtuous. They would never cry or whine. They would never be stingy. They would always share their toys”. They, well, you know I haven’t had any like that, but I am sure they exist.

DANIEL JUDD: [LAUGHING] You know C.S. Lewis talks about false doctrines oftentimes coming in pairs. Pairs of opposites. And the more that you embrace the one view, or the more you speak against the one view you gradually are pulled into the other. And so man being depraved and man being born good, those are the two opposite false doctrines.

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah, yeah, you’re right. The Book of Mormon certainly teaches, as does the Doctrine and Covenants, that the Fall took a toll. It does take a toll. Physically it takes a toll, spiritually. And I really feel like this concept of original sin is something that we’ve come to appreciate. Yes, there’s an effect of the Fall, but men and women are not held responsible for what Adam and Eve did and so as you’ve suggested there’s no original sin anymore.

DANIEL JUDD: Right, Right. Because of Christ, not because of our goodness or righteousness, but because of the Savior and His redemption.

ROBERT MILLET: Another matter I want to have us chat about a little bit, Dan, is Martin Luther in particular as well as Augustine they were very big on the idea that because of the Fall, humans beings do not even have the capacity to choose good or evil. That is they're natures are so depraved that they can't even choose. I want us to talk about that in just a minute. We'll be right back.

[PAUSE]

ROBERT MILLET: Welcome back to Mormon Identity, this is Bob Millet, I'm with Dan Judd, my colleague at BYU in the Religious Education faculty. Dan, we're talking about the effects of the Fall, we're talking about, we've talked about how traditional Christians view the Fall and how Latter-day Saint Christians view it and the distinctive features. We had just begun to talk about the fact that both St. Augustine and Martin Luther had both been convinced that because of the Fall men and women can't even choose. They do not even have the capacity to choose to do good. And I've always appreciated the fact that the Book of Mormon in particular is a, is a powerful witness to a very different position and here's 2 Nephi Chapter 2, verse 26, "And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that He may redeem the children of men from the fall." And here's the great statement, "And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon." Isn't that beautiful?

DANIEL JUDD: I think that really highlights in a wonderful way, really the purpose of the Fall even. That that allowed mankind at the very beginning to make some choices that led to him having even a greater degree of agency.

ROBERT MILLET: Well, and the fact is the Atonement is defined largely in terms of the Fall. Here's two doctrines that are, that are a package deal. You can't explain the Atonement unless there was a Fall. And we'll come in a little bit to another notion of why the Fall is therefore so critical. There was a Fall so there could be an Atonement.

DANIEL JUDD: Yeah, well listen to, you know these words from President Benson, "No one adequately and properly knows why he needs Christ until he understands and accepts the doctrine of the Fall and its effects upon all mankind."

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah.

DANIEL JUDD: And I'm not, I'm not sure that we do understand.

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah, right, you can't appreciate the malady unless, you can't appreciate the medicine unless you know what malady was. You can't appreciate the solution unless you know what the problem was. And I think one of the things that modern revelation can do for us is unveil the problem.

DANIEL JUDD: Right.

ROBERT MILLET: And I think it's probably the case that many people begin to recognize in scripture eventually through the Book of Mormon but eventually in the Bible the nature and

impact of the Fall and that makes them ever more appreciative for the Atonement.

DANIEL JUDD: You know, Bob, I'm trained as a psychologist and you have some of that same training in your background, and we both served as bishops and stake presidents and our own lives, our own families, there's a lot of "fallenness" out there.

ROBERT MILLET: No two ways about it. It's real.

DANIEL JUDD: Yeah, and we're fallen beings, but how grateful I am for what science and others have provided for us, but really it's the Savior. He can save us through His redemption.

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah, that in fact I don't know how I would get by. I don't understand how people get by without an understanding of His redemptive power. Let's, let me refer to a statement that's always been one of my favorites. Elder Orson F. Whitney described the Fall this way, he said, "The Fall had a two-fold direction. Downward, but forward." He said it "brought men into the world and set his feet upon progression's highway." I love that because it shows the positive, the optimistic dimension of the Fall, that that in order for the plan to move forward there had to be something from which, some state from which we could be delivered.

DANIEL JUDD: I love that.

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah.

DANIEL JUDD: Or Talmage said this, "Whereas our first parents are entitled to our deepest gratitude for their legacy, to posterity the means of witting title to glory, exaltation and eternal lives."

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah, that's masterful. Well this idea of a fortunate fall. There is, of course, the great statement, perhaps the greatest of them all, in the Book of Mormon "Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy." Talk about that for a minute, Dan, what do you make of that statement?

DANIEL JUDD: You know, 2 Nephi chapter 2 is one of the greatest blessings that we have, in of course the statement you just read comes from the words of Lehi there 2 Nephi 2, to his son Jacob. And really we have the Creation, we have the Fall, we have the Atonement, the three of these are what Elder McConkle called the "pillar doctrines of eternity."

ROBERT MILLET: Three pillars of eternity.

DANIEL JUDD: Yeah, and think about our lives, you know we all have those states, where we're in states of creation, you know, the grass is green and the water is clear, the sky is blue, but then it changes.

You know, a young missionary receives his call, he's thrilled but then he actually has that companion that he has a struggle with or he doesn't have any success with investigators being baptized.

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah

DANIEL JUDD: A wonderful couple is engaged and so thrilled about their life together and that's the creation, but then what happens? They experience the challenges and the oppositions and the trials of life. Well instead of giving up, I think there's a wonderful context

there for understanding that the Fall, opposition, there needs to be opposition in all things.

ROBERT MILLET: Yes.

DANIEL JUDD: Also in 2 Nephi 2, it really is a part of God's plan. And the answer, of course, is the Atonement of Christ.

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah, not just its redemptive nature, meaning getting our sins forgiven, getting our hearts made clean, but also its enabling nature. It's power to strengthen us to do things we could not do on our own.

Dan, I know you've done some work on this. One of the distinctive LDS insights, I believe, is what our concept of the Fall as a "fortunate fall" has to say about what really is one of the greatest challenges in the religious world is the challenge we call "the problem of evil and suffering." "The problem of evil and suffering." This whole matter, if God is all-wise and all-knowing, if God is all-powerful and all-loving, how could He permit such things to happen as the Holocaust or that young missionary getting ready for a mission and then suddenly he's killed by a drunk driver? Or that plane, as President Spencer W. Kimball describes, goes into a mountain killing 200 people. If God has the love for us that He says He has in scripture. If He has the power to prevent such things, why doesn't He? Why don't we discuss this when we come back. We'll be right back.

[PAUSE]

ROBERT MILLET: We welcome you back to this final segment of Mormon Identity. I'm joined by Professor Daniel Judd of the Department of Ancient Scripture and I'm Bob Millet. We're discussing the Fall and its effect upon all humankind. And we've begun talking about how the Atonement provides us with agency with the power to choose. Choose to be changed. Choose to be changed in Christ. We've talked about the concept of a "fortunate fall" as we might call it. I think it was Milton who used that phrase. A fortunate fall in the sense that it's a part of God's plan. Dan, I wanted us to follow up on how you feel the doctrines of the Restoration assist us with this very difficult challenge that the religious world faces of the problem of evil, and suffering and what, what can we know about why we go through what we go through? What, in your mind, what do we do as Latter-day Saints with the problem of suffering, that maybe others can't view in quite the same way?

DANIEL JUDD: You know, I'm glad you referred to that young couple who was so thrilled about their marriage and they began, they get married and then they begin to have the challenges and struggles of life or that missionary thrilled about his call, but then faces the challenges of a mission. You know if we were to have stayed, or if Adam and Eve were to have stayed in the Garden of Eden, we're also taught in 2 Nephi 2, they would not have come to know good from evil.

ROBERT MILLET: Right

DANIEL JUDD: Or even joy from pain, for that matter.

ROBERT MILLET: That's right.

DANIEL JUDD: And so we really have to have those contrasts. And that really is a part of, well there's

a philosopher named John Hick who called it “soul-making” who, you remember that phrase?

ROBERT MILLET: Yes

DANIEL JUDD: And not that I like all of what he said, but I like that phrase because God really is in the business of helping us to become like Him. And we cannot do that without opposition, without the challenges and trials and struggles of life, even the opportunity of sinning and failing.

ROBERT MILLET: Well, I’ve often thought, when you think of what does it take to become a wise person? I was talking with a group the other day, a class I was teaching and I asked them about wisdom and everyone always says “experience” and that’s true. Wisdom does come with experience but what no one was eager to volunteer was that wisdom often comes with pain.

DANIEL JUDD: Right.

ROBERT MILLET: Show me a wise person, well I’m show you a person who has had to not go around pain, but go through pain, has had to suffer pain.

DANIEL JUDD: You can’t...you can read about it, people can tell you about it, but there’s only really one way to understand it and that’s through going through it, through suffering.

ROBERT MILLET: You know it occurs to me that our notion of God, our understanding of God as our Heavenly Father, our understanding of God as the Father of our spirits, our understanding that God is an exalted man of holiness, that He has a body of flesh and bones, that He feels, that He understands, our knowledge of God, and our knowledge that God desires that one of the key ingredients of the plan be moral agency really effects how we view the Fall, but also how we view suffering in the world. I’m reminded of President Kimball’s, Elder Kimball’s then, marvelous talk *Tragedy or Destiny* given in the 1950s

DANIEL JUDD: That’s a classic,

ROBERT MILLET: Oh really, yeah! Back at BYU and he makes this statement something like “Was it God that directed the plane into the mountain? Or God that, that prompted the toddler to roam into the canal?” Well the obvious answer is no. And he went on to essentially say, “We have to understand that there are things that just happen. There are accidents that take place.”

DANIEL JUDD: He also said that, “Explain it if you can, but I don’t know all the answers.”

ROBERT MILLET: That’s right.

DANIEL JUDD: That’s important

ROBERT MILLET: It’s a woman coming to me after I’d given a “Know Your Religion” lecture and saying, “Brother Millet, my son, 16 years old, two weeks ago was working on his car, and the jack slipped and the car fell on him and killed him. Are you telling me that he was needed on the other side?” And you know, I don’t know her son, I haven’t had a revelation of that effect. I said, “Sister, I really don’t know if he was needed on the other side. I do know he died, and if he died, he’s probably going to have a work to do on the other side however he got there, whether he was needed by God or he died

because of an accident.”

DANIEL JUDD: We’re maybe too quick to answer those questions.

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah, I’m say, I think President Kimball said, you know, there are things that God could change. Could He have prevented the plane from going onto the mountain? Of course!

DANIEL JUDD: He could have.

ROBERT MILLET: Could He have saved Abinadi or the Prophet Joseph Smith from a martyr’s death? Of course! But He will not. And the reason He will not is this idea of we must be willing to live in a world where there is that opposition as you’ve described. Whether that opposition be a part of nature or whether it be because someone exercises their agency.

DANIEL JUDD: You know you mentioned John Milton, that phrase “fortunate fall”, it actually goes way back to St. Ambrose and some of the early men and again they, they understood this to a degree, but it was lost, it was lost through the centuries. But how grateful we are to have this restored through Joseph Smith through the Book of Mormon and I’m so grateful. Should I read that statement from Elder Whitney?

ROBERT MILLET: I would like to hear it.

DANIEL JUDD: I don’t know if we have enough time...

ROBERT MILLET: I would love to hear it.

DANIEL JUDD: He says, it’s Orson F. Whitney of the Quorum of the Twelve, and he says, “No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education. The development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude, and humility, all that we suffer and all that we endure especially when we endure it patiently builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God. And it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation that we gain the education that we come here to acquire and which will make us more like our Father and Mother in heaven.”

ROBERT MILLET: That’s beautiful.

DANIEL JUDD: Yeah.

ROBERT MILLET: That’s absolutely beautiful.

DANIEL JUDD: Hence the purpose of the Fall.

ROBERT MILLET: [SIGHS] Yeah. This, let me close on this for us if I could Dan, this wonderful testimony of Eve, Mother Eve, the great day when Adam and Eve received the explanation from an angel as to why they were offering sacrifices, mainly in similitude of the sacrifice that would come some 4000 years hence. And Eve his wife, Adam’s wife, heard all these things and was glad saying, “Were it not for our transgression, we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil and the joy of our redemption. And the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.” The marvelous teaching that comes through the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph Smith that is such a light and a refreshing breeze is that the Fall was

as much a part of foreordained plan as the very Atonement. God be thanked, if there was a Fall, so that there could be an Atonement.

[BEGIN MUSIC]

NARRATOR: You've been listening to Mormon Identity. Thanks for tuning in. We hope you join us next time.

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