

“That Ye Might Believe That Jesus Is the Christ”

Lesson 1 - Isaiah 61:1-3; Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 3:4-11; John 1:1-14; John 20:31

Overview of the New Testament

The 27 books in the New Testament can easily be divided into four parts:

- ❑ *The Gospels*, which are a record and witness of Jesus Christ's life, mission, and teachings. They do not present a biography of Christ's life, but instead, they bear a strong testimony of Him and his mission. Even though Matthew, Mark, and Luke are classified as the “synoptic gospels” (meaning “see-alike”), they are each unique in their testimony of the life of Christ, his teachings, his deeds, and the emphasis each gospel places on certain events. The Gospel of John, however, differs from the previous three in both its content and its presentation.
 - **Matthew** wrote to the unbelieving Jews, referring often to Old Testament prophecies to demonstrate to the Jews that Jesus the Christ was the promised Messiah.
 - **Mark** probably directed his writings to his missionary acquaintances, the Romans. He wrote in a simple style and highlighted the miracles of the Savior. It is generally accepted that the Apostle Peter greatly influenced Mark's writings.
 - **Luke** was strongly influenced by the Apostle Paul, his close associate and missionary companion. Luke was a more polished writer and seems to have directed his testimony to the educated, cultured Greeks.
 - **John** emphasized doctrine because he was writing for the newly converted saints. In his writing, we see an emphasis on spiritual things that would increase the understanding of the new saints.
- ❑ *The book of Acts*, which is an account of the ministry of the Apostles after Jesus' death and Resurrection. This book focuses on Peter's work among the Jews and Paul's work among the Gentiles.
- ❑ *The epistles* (letters) of Paul and other Church leaders, written to instruct and edify the Saints of their time.
- ❑ *The Lord's revelation* to the Apostle John on the isle of Patmos.

Lesson 1 - Introduction

Throughout this year, we will be encouraged to strengthen our testimonies of Jesus Christ by studying the New Testament in detail both in and out of our Sunday class. In this lesson, our testimonies of Jesus Christ and our appreciation of the New Testament can be strengthened by studying the words of Isaiah and others who prophesied of the Savior's mission.

Isaiah and John the Baptist prophesied of the Savior's mission

Isaiah 61:1-3 prophetically described aspects of the Savior's mission including:

- “Preach good tidings unto the meek” (verse 1).
- “Bind up the brokenhearted” (verse 1).
- “Proclaim liberty to the captives” (verse 1).
- “Comfort all that mourn” (verse 2).

Luke 3:4-9 (Joseph Smith Translation (JST) pgs. 805-6 appendix/LDS edition/King James Bible) - John the Baptist prophesied of the Savior's mission just before Jesus began his mortal ministry. He prophesied that the Messiah would:

- “Take away the sins of the world” (verse 5).
- “Bring salvation unto the heathen nations” (verse 5).
- “Gather together those who are lost” (verse 5).
- “Make possible the preaching of the gospel unto the Gentiles” (verse 6).
- “Be a light unto all who sit in darkness” (verse 7).

- “Bring to pass the resurrection from the dead” (verse 7).
- “Administer justice unto all” (verse 9).
- “Convince all the ungodly of their ungodly deeds” (verse 9).

Luke 4:16-21 Jesus quoted this passage while teaching at a synagogue at the beginning of his ministry to declare that he was the Messiah.

Those who have studied the Savior know that Jesus fulfilled each of these prophecies. When you think about the things that Jesus has done for us, do you also think about what our lives be like if Jesus had not done these things for us?

The Apostle John testified that Jesus Christ is “the true Light.”

John 1:1-3 (pages 807-8 in the appendix of the LDS edition of the King James Bible) teaches us that:

- He “was in the beginning” with God the Father. Note: The Savior’s mission began in the premortal world, long before he was born in Bethlehem.
- He is God. When we speak of God, we usually refer to Heavenly Father. However, *“the personage known as Jehovah in Old Testament times ... is the Son, known as Jesus Christ, ... who is also a God. Jesus works under the direction of the Father. ... Many of the things that the scripture says were done by God were actually done by ... Jesus”* (Bible Dictionary, “God,” 681).
- Through him the gospel was preached in the premortal world (Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:1).
- He made all things (John 1:3).
- He is the Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh (John 1:14; see also 1 Nephi 11:14-21). (Note: This doctrine will be discussed in lesson 2.)

In the following verses, John teaches of two attributes of the Savior...

John 1:4 - Here, the Apostle said that “in [Jesus] was life”.

John 1:9 – He testified that Jesus is “the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world”.

Each of the following verses helps us consider how the Savior has given each of us light and life.

- **John 8:12** – His followers “shall not walk in darkness”, they will have the “**light of life**”
- **1 Cor. 15:20-22** – “even so in Christ shall all be made **alive**”
- **Moroni 7:15-18** – “the **light** by which ye may judge, ...the **light** of Christ”
- **Moroni 7:41; D&C 88:6-14** – “to be raised unto **life** eternal” ... “the **light** of truth”
- **Bible Dictionary, “Light of Christ,” 725** (3 paragraphs)

John 20:31 reveals John’s purpose in writing his testimony—that we might “believe that Jesus is the Christ”. *Christ* is a Greek word meaning “anointed”. When we have a testimony that Jesus is the Christ, we know that he is the Son of God and was anointed and foreordained to be our Savior. Take time to consider how studying the New Testament in Sunday School this year might help strengthen your testimony that Jesus is the Christ.

James 1:5-6; D&C 50:17-22; D&C 88:118 – These scriptures help us understand what can we do individually and as a class to be guided by the Spirit as we study the New Testament. We can pray in faith to understand what we study; teach by the Spirit and receive the teachings by the Spirit of truth; and “*seek learning, even by study and also by faith.*”

John 1:10-14 (JST) These words apply to us, even though we were not on the earth during the Savior’s mortal ministry.

Elder Thomas S. Monson taught: *“We need not visit the Holy Land to feel him close to us. We need not walk by the shores of Galilee or among the Judean hills to walk where Jesus walked. In a very real sense, all can walk where Jesus walked when, with his words on our lips, his spirit in our hearts, and his teachings in our lives, we journey through mortality”* (Ensign, May 1974, 48).

Conclusion

Your testimony of the Savior will increase as you seek the Spirit’s guidance in your study of the New Testament and as you participate in class discussions. Use the *New Testament Class Member Study Guide* as you study the scriptures in preparation for each class.

“My Soul Doth Magnify the Lord”

Lesson 2 - Luke 1, Matthew 1

Introduction

If you could meet anyone in the New Testament besides Jesus, whom would you want to meet? One of the Apostles? One of Christ's closest associates? Why would you want to meet that person? Your answer probably bears out the fact that we are often drawn to righteous people because they follow the Savior and testify of him. As we become better acquainted with these people, we also become better acquainted with Jesus Christ. Today, we'll discuss several people who set righteous examples that can help us draw closer to him and develop greater faith in Jesus Christ through our study of the lives of Elisabeth, Zacharias, John the Baptist, Mary, and Joseph.

John the Baptist was born to Elisabeth and Zacharias

Luke 1:6-9 describe Elisabeth and Zacharias as righteous, obedient, and faithful.

Luke 1:7, 13 reveal that Zacharias and Elisabeth prayed for the blessing of posterity.

In **Luke 1:11-13** and **Luke 1:24-25**, we see how their prayers were finally answered. Zacharias and Elisabeth had probably prayed for many years that they would be blessed with a child. However, Heavenly Father did not grant them this blessing until the time was right to accomplish his purposes. We need to follow their example of remaining faithful and avoiding discouragement when our sincere prayers are not immediately answered in the way we desire.

Luke 1:14-17 contains Gabriel's prophecy about John's mission.

- John would “*turn [many people] to the Lord their God*” (verse 16).
- He would “*turn the hearts of the fathers to the children*” (verse 17).
- He would “*turn ... the disobedient to the wisdom of the just*” (verse 17).
- He would “*make ready a people prepared for the Lord*” (verse 17).

Note: John the Baptist was “*the outstanding bearer of the Aaronic Priesthood in all history*” (Bible Dictionary, “John the Baptist,” 714). And note that all these accomplishments of John's mission can be applied to members who hold the Aaronic Priesthood.

Luke 1:18-20 tells us that as a result of his doubt about the words of the angel, Zacharias was struck dumb.

Luke 1:59-63 recounts Zacharias's actions after John's birth, demonstrating his renewed faith. He and Elisabeth named their son John, thus obeying God's command rather than following local traditions.

Luke 1:68-79 contain Zacharias' prophecy about the mission of his son, as well as the redemption, salvation, remission of sins, tender mercy, and light that would come through Jesus Christ.

John 1:6-9 remind us that, like John the Baptist, we should focus our service on helping others come to Christ and receive the “*true light*”.

Luke 1:80 teaches that after John was born, he grew and “*waxed strong in spirit*”, meaning that he grew or developed in spirituality. John needed to wax strong in spirit to be able to fulfill his mission. We too need to wax strong in spirit to carry out our mission(s).

Mary and Joseph learn that Mary will be the mother of the Son of God

Luke 1:26-33 records the angel Gabriel's visit to Mary. The Savior needed to be the son of a mortal mother and an immortal Father to be capable of accomplishing his unique mission.

Speaking of Jesus Christ, Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: “God was his Father, from which Immortal Personage ... he inherited the power of immortality, which is the power to live forever; or, having chosen to die, it is the power to rise again in immortality, thereafter to live forever without again seeing corruption. ... “... Mary was his mother, from which mortal woman ... he inherited the power of mortality, which is the power to die. ... “It was because of this ... intermixture of the divine and the mortal in one person, that our Lord was able to work out the infinite and eternal atonement. Because God was his Father and Mary was his mother, he had

power to live or to die, as he chose, and having laid down his life, he had power to take it again, and then, in a way incomprehensible to us, to pass on the effects of that resurrection to all men so that all shall rise from the tomb" (*The Promised Messiah* [1978], 470-71).

Luke 1:26-38, and **1:45-49** give us an opportunity to learn about Mary from her conversations with the angel and with Elisabeth.

- Mary had found favor with God (verses 28, 30), meaning that she was found worthy in His sight for special blessings and responsibilities. She could have looked to other sources for favor, as some people do, but she realized that looking for favor from the other available sources might make it difficult for her to find favor with God.
- Mary was worthy to have the Lord with her (verse 28). In our lives, we need to be worthy of having the Spirit with us, so consider how you might increase your worthiness.
- Mary was humble and submissive to the will of the Lord (verses 38, 48). Obviously, it is important for us to submit to the Lord's will if we wish to have his greatest blessings. Think seriously about how you might become more humble and submissive.
- Mary rejoiced in her Savior (verse 47). To benefit from her example, we should consider how we may rejoice in the Savior.

Luke 1:39-44 and **Luke 1:15** - Elisabeth and her unborn son rejoiced when Mary came to visit, in part, because of the influence of the Holy Ghost. One of the Holy Ghost's principal roles is to testify of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 1:18-19 shows that Joseph and his love for Mary were tested. When he learned that Mary was with child, according to the law, Joseph could have accused Mary of violating the marriage covenant and brought her to a public trial. Such a trial could have resulted in a death sentence. Rather than do this, he decided to release her privately from the marriage contract. For Mary's sake, he shunned the public humiliation he could have subjected her to and ignored his own sorrow and suffering. Joseph proved faithful and trustworthy because it was only *after* he had made the correct decision to deal lovingly with Mary that the angel visited him and directed that he should take Mary as his wife.

Matthew 1:20-23 reveals how Heavenly Father helped Joseph accept Mary's condition and prepare for his own responsibilities.

Matthew 1:24-25 teaches us what Joseph did in response to this dream and gives us some insight into his character.

"That thou mightest know the certainty of those things"

Luke 1:3-4 shows that Luke addressed his testimony to a person named Theophilus. Luke's purpose in writing his testimony was to help Theophilus know the certainty of things that had already been taught. Think about how you have been strengthened as you have heard others testify of familiar doctrines and well-known scripture accounts.

Conclusion

Luke 1:46 - In this verse, the word *magnify* refers to Mary's efforts to praise the Lord and help others see his greatness.

The examples of Elisabeth, Zacharias, John the Baptist, Mary, and Joseph can help us see the Savior's greatness and increase our faith in him. Then, it is our responsibility to determine how we can help others increase their faith in Jesus Christ.

“Unto You Is Born ... a Savior”

Lesson 3 – Luke 2; Matthew 2

Introduction

Today, we will ponder rejoicing in the birth of Jesus Christ and following the example he set in his youth, “[*increasing*] in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52)

Match the following responses with the appropriate person:

Person	Response
<i>a shepherd</i>	I traveled a great distance to find him, gave him gifts, and worshiped him. (Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11)
<i>Simeon</i>	I made no room for him. (Luke 2:7)
<i>a wise man from the east</i>	Having received a witness from the Holy Ghost, I took the child up in my arms and knew that I could die in peace. (Luke 2:25-32)
<i>Herod</i>	I said, “ <i>Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.</i> ” (Luke 2:13-14)
<i>a person at an inn</i>	I went quickly to see him. (Luke 2:15-16)
<i>Anna</i>	I was troubled and tried to kill him. (Matthew 2:3-4, 16)
<i>an angel</i>	After seeing him in the temple, I expressed gratitude and spread the news of his birth. (Luke 2:36-38)
<i>Mary</i>	I pondered the event in my heart. (Luke 2:19)

As we proceed with today’s lesson, ponder these questions:

- How do you respond to the account of the Savior’s birth?
- How do you respond to his life, death, atonement, and resurrection?

The Birth of Jesus Christ

John 17:5 Jesus had glory with Heavenly Father “*before the world was*”.

Mosiah 3:8 He created the heavens and the earth.

3 Nephi 15:2-5 As Jehovah, he revealed commandments and gospel truths to the prophets of the Old Testament.

3 Nephi 27:13-16 teaches that Jesus came to earth to do the will of the Father, sacrificing himself in the Atonement, and providing a way for men to be saved.

Luke 2:1-7 provides us with the circumstances of Jesus’ birth. These circumstances foreshadowed his mortal ministry and his atoning sacrifice as he came to earth in very humble surroundings and went unnoticed by much of the world.

People today often refuse to make room for the Savior in their lives, just as the innkeeper did at his birth. It would be worthwhile for us to ponder that which we can do to make room for him in our daily lives.

Angels and many others rejoiced at Jesus’ birth.

Luke 2:13-14 records the message of the angels as they announced Jesus’ birth. Jesus glorified the Father by accepting and fulfilling his mission of salvation and redemption. He brought peace and goodwill to all people as they have accepted his teachings and sacrifice.

It is our challenge to find ways in which we can show our gratitude to God for the gift of his Son.

Luke 2:17-18 The shepherds, after they saw the newborn Savior, made his birth known to others.

We need to follow their example by sharing our testimony that the Messiah has come. Think of someone with whom you can share your testimony of the Savior.

Luke 2:19 After Jesus’ birth and the visit of the shepherds, the scripture reveals that Mary pondered these events. Obviously, Mary took time to cherish and ponder sacred experiences.

Think about how much time you take to cherish and ponder sacred or spiritual experiences.

Luke 2:25-26, 37 bears testimony that Simeon and Anna had been prepared to see the child Jesus by their years of devout worship and obedience.

Luke 2:27-35, 38 records the response of these devout servants when they saw Christ. From their prophecies we learn that the Savior would bring salvation, be a light to both the Jews and Gentiles, and would bring redemption to his people.

Wise men came to worship the child Jesus. Herod sought to kill him

Matthew 2:1-2 testifies that the “*wise men from the east*” sought Jesus that they might worship him.

Matthew 2:11 When they found him, they worshiped him and offered gifts. Note that when they finally reached Jesus, he was a “*young child*,” not a newborn baby.

We should follow the example of the wise men and consider what gifts we could offer to the Lord.

Matthew 2:3-6, 13 Herod wanted to find Jesus because he was troubled, and he wanted to kill Jesus.

Matthew 2:2, 6 Jesus Christ’s birth troubled the king because, according to prophecy, Jesus would rule Israel.

Matthew 2:13-15 Jesus was protected from Herod by being taken to Egypt until Herod was no longer a threat to him.

Matthew 2:19-23 Joseph knew when to return from Egypt because of a dream in which he was instructed. Joseph was able to receive this guidance from God because he was faithful and obedient, following the Spirit in his actions.

Today’s fathers and mothers also need to be able to receive revelation concerning dangers and challenges affecting their families. Consider carefully how God has helped you as you have sought his guidance for your family.

Guided by the Father, Jesus prepared in his youth for his ministry.

Luke 2:41-42 Every year Joseph and Mary and other faithful Jews celebrated the Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem. As was customary, Jesus accompanied them when he reached the age of 12.

Luke 2:43-45 After celebrating the Passover in Jerusalem, Mary and Joseph had begun their journey back to Nazareth when they realized that 12-year-old Jesus was not with them.

Luke 2:46 records that they finally found the young Jesus in the temple.

Think about this: If your parents or other loved ones did not know where you were, could they be confident that you were doing things that would please your Heavenly Father?

Luke 2:46 (Joseph Smith Translation) says that the men in the temple “*were hearing [Jesus], and asking him questions.*” This reveals the thoroughness and depth of Jesus’ training in his youth.

Luke 2:48 When Mary and Joseph found Jesus, Mary said to him, “*Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing*”. In this verse, she was referring to Joseph when she said “*thy father*”.

Luke 2:49 Jesus’ responded to Mary’s concern by saying that he was about “*my Father’s business*”, referring to his Heavenly Father. Obviously, Jesus understood his foreordained mission at this time in his youth.

Luke 2:51 As a youth, Jesus treated Mary and Joseph with honor and respect. Even though he was the Son of God, he was subject to his mother and to Joseph.

We should learn from his example of humility.

Luke 2:52 As a youth, Jesus “*increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man*”. In other words, he developed intellectually, physically, spiritually, and socially.

Think about how we might follow that example with some specific things that will help us intellectually, physically, and spiritually.

D&C 93:11-17 We learn from these verses that in his preparation to be our Redeemer, Jesus did not receive all the necessary intelligence, power, wisdom, and glory at once. He received these things “*grace for grace*,” a little at a time.

D&C 93:18-20 teaches that if we keep the commandments, we will receive of his fulness.

Conclusion We should rejoice in the birth of the Savior and follow the example he set in his youth, growing “*grace for grace*”.

“Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord”

Lesson 4 – Matthew 3-4; John 1:35-51

מָשִׁיחַ

This is the Hebrew word *Messiah*, which means *anointed*. The Jews had waited centuries for the coming of the Messiah, who, according to prophecy, would be their anointed King and Deliverer. The Greek word for *Messiah* is *Christ*. Jesus Christ was the long-awaited Messiah, and John the Baptist was the prophet sent to prepare the way for him. Today’s lesson should inspire us to draw near to the Savior by repenting of our sins, keeping our baptismal covenants, and avoiding temptation.

John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 40:3; 1 Nephi 10:7-10 Centuries before John’s birth, many prophets foresaw his ministry and testified of his greatness as the one who would prepare the way for the Messiah.

In preparation for John’s ministry:

Luke 1:13-19 - the angel Gabriel announced John’s forthcoming birth

Luke 1:67-79 - Zacharias prophesied on the day of John’s naming and circumcision

D&C 84:27-28 - and an angel ordained eight-day-old John to his mission

Luke 7:28 - The crowning statement of John’s greatness came from the Savior himself, who said, “*Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist*”

John was born about six months before Jesus. Shortly after Jesus’ birth, Herod, feeling threatened by the announcement that a new king of the Jews had been born, “*slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under*” (Matthew 2:16). To protect Jesus, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and directed him to take Jesus and Mary to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15). To protect John, “*Zacharias caused [Elisabeth] to take him into the mountains, where he was raised on locusts and wild honey*” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 261). John began his public ministry many years later, first preaching in the wilderness and then in Jerusalem and “*all the region round about Jordan*” (Matthew 3:5).

Luke 1:76-79; 3:3-4 foretells the mission of John the Baptist. It was important that someone prepare the way by teaching salvation through repentance and God’s mercy and to give guidance unto peace.

Matthew 3:1-2 tells us that John preached to prepare the people for the coming of the Savior.

Repentance requires at least the following steps:

- **2 Corinthians 7:9-10** Feeling godly sorrow for sin.
- **D&C 58:42-43** Confessing and forsaking sins.
- **Luke 19:8** Making amends, where possible, for wrongs done.
- **D&C 1:31-32** Obeying the commandments.
- **Mosiah 7:33** Turning to the Lord and serving him.

3 Nephi 27:19 - Repentance prepares us to dwell with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ by giving us an opportunity to come unto Christ, cleanse ourselves, demonstrate faith, and endure to the end.

Matthew 3:7; Luke 7:29-30 The Pharisees and Sadducees witnessed baptisms performed by John but chose not to be baptized.

Matthew 3:35 (JST) John rebuked them, urging them to “*repent ... and bring forth fruits meet for repentance*” (*Fruits* refers to results and that the word *meet* means worthy or appropriate).

Moroni 8:25-26 The fruits of repentance include baptism, fulfilling of the commandments, remission of sins, development of meekness and humility, the reception of the Holy Ghost, being filled with hope and perfect love, being diligent in prayer, and enduring to the end.

Matthew 3:11 John baptized “with water unto repentance” and promised that Jesus would baptize “with the Holy Ghost, and with fire”. We are baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire when we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands (D&C 20:41). “*The gift of the Holy Ghost is the right to have, whenever one is worthy, the companionship of the Holy Ghost. ... It acts as a cleansing agent to purify a person and sanctify him from all sin. Thus it is often spoken of as ‘fire’*” (Bible Dictionary, “Holy Ghost,” 704).

Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist.

Matthew 3:14 John was hesitant to baptize Jesus because he felt unworthy compared to Jesus.

Matthew 3:15; 2 Nephi 31:6-7, 9-11 Jesus need to be baptized “to fulfil all righteousness”, meaning that even though he had no sin, he would commit a sin of omission if he did not covenant to keep the Father’s commandments and set a righteous example for all mankind.

2 Nephi 31:5, 12-13, 17-18; D&C 20:71; D&C 49:13-14 We need to be baptized to receive remission of sin, make a covenant of obedience with the Father, follow the Savior’s example and do what he did, and to enter into the gate to the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life.

D&C 20:37 The covenants we make when we are baptized include: taking the name of Christ, serving Him to the end, doing good works, and joining His Church.

Mosiah 18:8-10 These covenants should affect our daily actions, causing us to be true “Christians”, serve our brothers and sisters, keep the commandments, and be guided by the Spirit.

Jesus withstood Satan’s temptations in the wilderness.

Matthew 4:1 (JST) Soon after Jesus was baptized, the Spirit led him into the wilderness to be with God. The spiritual strength he gained there prepared Jesus to withstand Satan’s temptations. Fasting, prayer, and being “led ... of the Spirit” can also fortify us against temptation by strengthening our spiritual control over our physical appetites and needs.

Matthew 4:2-3 Satan tried to appeal to the desire to satisfy physical appetite when he tempted Jesus, who had been fasting, to turn the stones into bread. Satan tempts us to give in to physical appetites by making those appetites seem overwhelming and important. We can recognize and resist these temptations by retaining an eternal perspective on what is important.

Matthew 4:5-6 Satan tried to appeal to pride when he tempted Jesus to cast himself down from the pinnacle and prove that he had the power to be saved by angels. Satan tries to appeal to our pride. We can recognize and withstand temptations to gratify prideful desires only if we have developed humility.

Matthew 4:8-9 Satan offered Jesus worldly riches and power if Jesus would worship him. Obviously, he uses those same temptations on us today.

Matthew 4:10 We can recognize and resist temptations by worshiping and serving only God.

D&C 104:14 Satan’s offer to give Jesus the kingdoms of the world was false. Satan makes some false offers to us today to entice us to sin.

Matthew 4:3-4, 6-7, 8-10 Jesus responded to each of Satan’s temptations by quoting the scriptures.

Helaman 3:29-30 The scriptures give us strength to withstand temptation by overcoming the “wiles” of Satan and lead us “*across that everlasting gulf of misery*” to “*the right hand of God*”.

Matthew 4:3, 6 Satan twice questioned whether Jesus was the Son of God. Think about it: Why did Satan raise this question? How does he raise this question in the world today?

Moses 1:12-22 When we face temptation, it helps to know that we are children of God because it strengthens our resolve to be like our Father and reach our true potential.

Hebrews 4:14-15 It helps us to know that Jesus, the Son of God, faced temptations similar to those we face because we can then follow his example when such temptations are presented.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin said: “*The Lord is well aware of our mortality. He knows our weaknesses. He understands the challenges of our everyday lives. He has great empathy for the temptations of earthly appetites and passions*” (*Ensign*, May 1996, 34).

Some of John the Baptist’s disciples decided to follow Jesus.

John 1:35-37 When Jesus began his mortal ministry, John the Baptist encouraged his own disciples to follow the Messiah.

John 1:38-39 When Jesus saw two of John the Baptist’s disciples following Him, He asked them what they sought. Think about what you seek by following the Master.

John 1:40-42 When Andrew heard and recognized the Savior, he went to alert his brother, Simon Peter.

John 1:43-46 After receiving a witness that Jesus was the Messiah, Philip answer Nathanael’s doubts by inviting him to come and see for himself. Consider what we can do to invite others to “come and see” the Savior.

Conclusion

The invitation to “come and see” the Savior is extended to each of us. We can accept that invitation by repenting, being baptized, keeping our baptismal covenants, and withstanding temptation.

“Born Again”

Lesson 5 – John 3-4

Introduction

Imagine an indoor plant. Consider what happens to the plant if you fail to water it regularly. Then consider what happens to you if you don't drink enough water on a regular basis. Just as you would die without physical water, you would die spiritually if you did not receive spiritual water. This lesson presents Jesus' teachings about being born of the water and the Spirit and about the living water he offers.

Jesus taught that all must be born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God

Nicodemus was a leader in the Jewish community. He came to Jesus knowing that Jesus was *“a teacher come from God”* (John 3:2).

John 3:5 Jesus taught Nicodemus that he must be baptized to enter the kingdom of God.

Baptism is a symbol of rebirth because being immersed in water symbolizes the death or burial of our past sins; therefore, when we rise out of the water, we are reborn—starting a new life.

Being *“born ... of the Spirit”* follows as we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost and then actually receive the Holy Ghost as a cleansing influence and constant companion.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught that *“Church members are not born again by the mere fact of baptism alone”* (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1966-73], 1:142).

Besides being baptized and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, the following are necessary in becoming born again:

John 3:16, 18 Believing in Jesus Christ

Mosiah 5:1-7 Experiencing *“a mighty change in ... our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually”* (verse 2; see also **Alma 5:12-14, 26**)

Mosiah 27:25-26 –

Being *“changed from [a] carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness”*....

Becoming *“[God's] sons and daughters”* (see also **Mosiah 5:7.**)

Becoming *“new creatures”*

Alma 5:14-35 Having *“the image of God engraven upon [our] countenances”* (verse 19, see 14 also)

Alma 22:15-18 - Repenting so our *“garments [are] purified until they are cleansed from all stain, through the blood of [Christ]”* (**Alma 5:21; see also Alma 5:19, 33-34; Alma 22:18**)

Elder McConkie also taught that being born again *“doesn't happen in an instant. [It] is a process”* (“Jesus Christ and Him Crucified,” in *1976 Devotional Speeches of the Year*, 399).

2 Nephi 31:19-20 gives us guidance on what we can do to continue this process of rebirth throughout our lives. According to the scripture, we must:

- Maintain unshaken faith in Christ
- Press forward in Christlike behavior
- Have a perfect brightness of hope
- Possess a love of God and all men
- Feast upon the word of Christ
- Endure to the end

We must also consider how we might overcome discouragement or setbacks in our spiritual progress. Think about what changes you might have observed in yourself or someone else during the process of becoming born again.

John 3:14-18 teaches truths about the Savior's mission that are related to his commandment that we be born again.

- The Savior's atonement provided the way for us to be born again
- To benefit fully from the Atonement, we must believe in the Savior
- Eternal life is possible as our ultimate reward
- The atonement was a gift from our Heavenly Father
- Christ came to save, not to condemn
- If we choose not to believe, we condemn ourselves

John 3:19-21 Jesus used the concepts of light and darkness to teach Nicodemus. He taught that those who choose evil like to keep their deeds hidden so that they can avoid being reprov'd for their

wickedness, so they appreciate darkness that cloaks them. On the other hand, those who follow the commandments seek the light so that their deeds glorify God and inspire others.

As we look around us, we see that some choose darkness over light, while we maintain the ability to love the light and shun darkness. Think about what helps us choose the light.

D&C 50:24; 88:67 remind us of the promises the Lord has made to those who come to the light. We are promised in Section 50 that as we receive light, we can receive more light and it will grow brighter and brighter. In Section 88, we are promised that we can be filled with light and comprehend all things.

Jesus taught a Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well

While Jesus and his disciples were traveling from Judea to Galilee, they stopped to rest at Jacob's Well in Samaria. While Jesus sat by the well, a Samaritan woman came to draw water.

John 4:9 records that while the Jews had "*no dealings with the Samaritans*" and usually avoided Samaria when traveling, Jesus deliberately went through Samaria—drawing attention to his attitude about any person or group considered inferior. We can apply his example as we deal with our modern-day "Samaritans".

John 4:9, 11-12, 15, 19, 25 show how the Samaritan woman made it easier for Jesus to teach her by being humble, desiring to know more, and believing his words. Following her example, we should develop those attributes to become more receptive to the Savior's teachings.

The Samaritan woman changed as Jesus spoke to her and Jesus helped bring about that change. He taught her at her level of understanding, he testified of himself, he used the symbol of water powerfully, and he showed compassion. Obviously, we can follow his example as we teach others if we are guided and inspired by the Spirit as we teach the gospel.

John 4:10 Jesus told the Samaritan woman that he could give her "*living water*".

After reviewing **1 Nephi 11:25** and **D&C 63:23** we see that "*living water*" means:

- the doctrines of the gospel
- the love of God
- the Atonement

We obtain living water when we study the scriptures, hearken to the living prophets, receive answers to our prayers, and when we worship and perform service in the temples. Pause a moment—think about how living water blesses you.

John 4:7, 28-29 The Samaritan woman had come to the well for water. However, after she spoke with Jesus, she left her pitcher at the well and went to tell others about the experience. Think about how well you follow her example.

John 4:39-42 Other people were blessed because of the faith of the Samaritan woman. Because of her testimony, many went to hear the Savior for themselves and asked him to stay with them for awhile. During two days of teaching, he converted many.

Class participation: In class, you might offer examples of how you have been blessed or seen others blessed for believing in the Lord and share your thoughts about how your faith can affect those around you.

Conclusion

Just as plants need water to live, we need to follow the Savior and his teachings to be born again and have everlasting life.

“They Straightway Left Their Nets”

Lesson 6 – Luke 4:14-32; Luke 5; Luke 6:12-16; Matthew 10

Introduction

Mosiah 27:31 “*Yea, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess before him. Yea, even at the last day, when all men shall stand to be judged of him, then shall they confess that he is God;...*” At Jesus Christ’s Second Coming, everyone will recognize him as the Savior. This was not true at his first coming. The Jews had studied prophecies about the Savior’s coming for centuries, but many of those who heard Jesus failed to recognize him as the Savior. Because Jesus did not free the Jews from Roman control, as they expected the Messiah to do, many of them rejected him and his message. The first part of today’s lesson will discuss what happened when Jesus first announced that he was the long-awaited Messiah. Other parts of the lesson will discuss Jesus’ calling of Apostles to help spread his message.

Jesus revealed that He came as the Messiah.

Jesus was invited to read a passage of scripture and comment on it during the service in the synagogue in Nazareth.

Luke 4:16-19 (note: verses 18-19 are a quotation of Isaiah 61:1-2. Isaiah is called “Esaias” in Luke 4:17) These verses are a prophetic description of things the Messiah would do.

Luke 4:21 When Jesus finished reading the passage from Isaiah, he declared that he was the Messiah of whom Isaiah prophesied and for whom the Jews had been waiting for centuries.

Luke 4:22-29 records the people in the synagogue’s response to Jesus’ declaration.

Luke 4:22 Obviously, the people in the synagogue had difficulty accepting Jesus as the Messiah. They knew him and had watched him grow up, so they could not see how he could be the great Messiah they were expecting. Some people today have difficulty accepting Jesus Christ as the Savior. Our challenge is to strengthen our testimonies that Jesus is the Savior.

Jesus called his Twelve Apostles

Apostles are called to do what Jesus himself did in the synagogue in Nazareth—declare that he is the Messiah, the Savior.

Luke 5:1-2 Simon Peter, James, and John were pursuing their livelihood as fishermen when Jesus came to them.

Luke 5:10 Jesus told them that their lives would change if they followed him and they would catch men rather than fish. Think about how your life has been affected because of your decision to follow Jesus Christ.

Mark 1:17 records that Jesus told Peter, James, and John that they would toil as “fishers of men”. In Luke 5, he demonstrated his power and taught them a symbolic lesson about the experiences they would have with him:

- **Luke 5:5:** “*At thy word I will let down the net.*” Taught that they would work where Jesus directed them.
- **Luke 5:6:** “*They inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.*” taught that they would find many people who would accept the gospel.
- **Luke 5:7:** “*They beckoned unto their partners ... that they should come and help them.*” foretold the truth that they would call others to assist in the work.

Luke 5:1-11 records that Jesus called Peter, James, and John to be his disciples. Later he would call them to be Apostles. The difference between a disciple and an Apostle is important. A **disciple** is any follower of Jesus Christ (Bible Dictionary, “Disciple,” 657). An **Apostle** is a disciple who has been called to be a special witness of Christ (**D&C 107:23**). The word *Apostle* means “one [who is] sent forth” (Bible Dictionary, “Apostle,” 612). The members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are sent forth to testify to the world that Jesus is the Savior and Redeemer of mankind.

It is important that Jesus call Apostles.

Matthew 9:36-38 teaches that more laborers were needed

Matthew 16:19 - the Apostles would hold the keys for directing the Lord’s work on earth

Mark 3:14-15 – they would preach the gospel, work miracles, and cast out devils

John 20:19-21 they were sent by Jesus as messengers of peace

John 20:23 –they were sent as judges in Israel with power to forgive sin

Ephesians 4:11-15 – The Apostles would work on perfecting the saints and edifying the Church; teach correct doctrines that unify the faith and teach the true nature of God; help the saints avoid false doctrine and the wiles of Satan; and spread the gospel of truth and love.

They would help Jesus preach the gospel while he was in his mortal ministry and would lead the Church and carry on priesthood authority after Jesus was gone. For those same reasons, the Lord has called Apostles today.

Luke 6:12-13 shows that Jesus chose the original Twelve Apostles by inspiration and prayer. Just as Jesus prepared himself to call them, people are chosen today to be Apostles and to serve in other Church callings by prayer and inspiration.

Luke 5:5, 8, 11, 27-28 The scriptures tell us about the background and character of the men whom Jesus called as Apostles: they had no formal training for the ministry, but they were humble, obedient, hardworking men who were willing to sacrifice everything to follow the Lord.

Modern day revelation explains how a person becomes qualified to serve the Lord:

D&C 4:3, 5-6: “*..if ye have desires to serve God...*”; “*And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work.*”; “*Remember faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, and diligence*”

Articles of Faith 1:5. “*...called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority...*”

Jesus ordained and instructed the Twelve Apostles

After Jesus called the Twelve Apostles, he gave them priesthood power and instructed them in their responsibilities. We learn about the powers and responsibilities of Apostles from Jesus’ counsel in

Matthew 10:1, 6-8, 11-14, 19-20, 39

- They have power to heal the spiritually and physically sick (verse 1).
- They are sent to the lost sheep of Israel to preach that the kingdom of heaven is at hand (verses 6-7).
- They are to use their priesthood power to bless and heal people (verse 8).
- They are to seek out those who are prepared to hear the gospel (verses 11-14).
- They are to teach as guided by the Spirit (verses 19-20).
- They are to give their lives entirely to the Savior’s work (verse 39).

We can compare the powers and responsibilities given to the original Apostles to those given to latter-day Apostles in these scriptures:

- **D&C 107:23, 33, 35** - “*special witnesses*”; “*a Traveling Presiding High Council, to officiate in the name of the Lord...to build up the church, and regulate all the affairs of the same in all nations...*”; “*...sent out...holding the keys, to open the door by the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ...*”
- **D&C 112:14, 19-22, 30-31** – “*...unto all the Twelve: Arise and gird up your loins, take up your cross, follow me, and feed my sheep.*”; “*...withersoever they shall send you, go ye...that they may receive my word*”; “*...I have made counselors for my name’s sake...*”; “*...shall have power to open the door of my kingdom to any nation...*”; “*Inasmuch as they shall humble themselves before me, and abide in my word, and hearken to the voice of my Spirit.*”

Matthew 10:40-42; D&C 124:45-46 promise blessings to those who follow the Apostles: “*He that receiveth a prophet...shall receive a prophet’s reward...shall in no wise lose his reward*”; “*...they [my people] shall not be moved out of their place*”.

Elder Spencer W. Kimball said: “*No one in this Church will ever go far astray who ties himself securely to the Church Authorities whom the Lord has placed in his Church. This Church will never go astray; the Quorum of the Twelve will never lead you into bypaths; it never has and never will*” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1951, 104).

Conclusion

Jesus Christ is the true Messiah and the Twelve Apostles are special witnesses of him.

“[He] Took Our Infirmities, and Bare Our Sicknesses”

Lesson 7 - Mark 1-2; Mark 4:35-41; Mark 5; Luke 7:11-17

Introduction

A miracle is an extraordinary event caused by divine or spiritual power (see Bible Dictionary, “Miracles,” 732-33.) Think about one of the Savior’s miracles that you would like to have witnessed. *Why* would you want to see *that* miracle? Today’s lesson will discuss some of the Savior’s miracles and his reasons for performing them.

Old Testament Miracles

Miracles were not new to the Jews. Miracles had been performed previously by Old Testament prophets whom the Jews honored. Here are a few examples:

- The prophet Elijah raises a boy from the dead (**1 Kings 17:17-24**).
- The prophet Elisha feeds a multitude with a small amount of food (**2 Kings 4:42-44**).
- The prophet Elisha heals Naaman, a leper (**2 Kings 5:1-19**).

The power used by these prophets to perform miracles was the same power that was manifested in Jesus—The priesthood, the divine power given to them by Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Jesus traveled through Galilee teaching the gospel and performing miracles

Mark 1:34, 39 As Jesus traveled throughout Galilee teaching the gospel, he performed many miracles, including healing the sick and casting out devils. As we search the scriptures, we find that Jesus performed these and other miracles during his ministry for these reasons:

- **Mark 5:19; 3 Nephi 17:6-7** To show love and compassion.
- **Matthew 9:27-30** To build and confirm faith.
- **Mark 1:27; Mark 2:10-11** To prove his divinity and power

Mark 1:22, Mark 1:27 The people in the synagogue in Capernaum were amazed at Jesus’ teachings and his ability to cast out unclean spirits because he taught as one having authority and not one who was simply a teacher. We know the authority by which Jesus taught and performed his miracles. He did it by the power of the priesthood, which the scribes did not have. We have access to this power and authority today in the Church.

Mark 1:41 One reason Jesus healed the leper was because he was moved with compassion. Jesus performed many miracles that directly blessed just one person, demonstrating how Jesus feels about us individually—as children of the Father with great potential.

Think about how he has shown love and compassion for you.

Think about how we can show Christlike love and compassion for those around us.

And consider how other people have shown Christlike love and compassion for you.

Jesus forgave a man’s sins and healed the man of palsy.

Mark 2:3, 5 The faith of his companions contributed to the healing of the man who was sick with palsy.

Mark 2:4 These people demonstrated their faith by going the extra mile to seek help for their friend.

Think about how you can exercise faith in behalf of others and how the faith of others has helped you or someone you know.

Mark 2:5-7 Some of the scribes thought it was blasphemous when Jesus told the man with palsy that his sins were forgiven. The Savior immediately perceived their thoughts.

Mark 2:8-11 Jesus responded to these scribes by pointing out the power that he had. Just as it was a miracle for the man to be healed of palsy, it was also a miracle for him to be forgiven of his sins. This miracle of forgiveness is available to each of us as we repent.

Isaiah 53:5; 2 Nephi 25:13; 3 Nephi 9:13 The Savior’s physical healings were symbols of his redemptive power—the power to heal all the wounds of mortality and give immortality to all mankind.

Think about how Jesus' healing power has blessed you spiritually and how you might seek spiritual healing.

Jesus calmed the sea, cast out devils, and raised the son of the widow of Nain from death

The physical aspects of the Savior's miracles often symbolized spiritual truths. Consider the spiritual truths can be learned from the following miracles:

- **Mark 4:35-41.** Jesus calmed the sea. (He can bring us peace.)
- **Mark 5:1-20.** Jesus cast out a legion of devils. (He can cast Satan and his influence out of our lives.)
- **Luke 7:11-17.** Jesus raised a young man from the dead. (Because of his Atonement, we will rise from the dead in the Resurrection.)

Upon serious consideration, other insights might be gained from studying these three miracles.

Jesus healed a woman with an issue of blood and raised Jairus's daughter from the dead.

Mark 5:25-29 The woman with an issue of blood showed her faith by mingling with the crowd around Jesus for an opportunity just to touch his clothes.

Mark 5:34 records the cause of her healing. It was her faith in Jesus' power, not the act of touching his garment that caused her to be healed.

Mark 5:22-23 Jairus showed his faith in the Savior by asking that the Savior lay his hands on his daughter that she might be healed.

Mark 5:36 When Jairus heard that his daughter was dead, Jesus encouraged him to be strong in his faith. Think about how you can apply these words in your life.

Ether 12:12, Ether 12:18; Moroni 7:37 Faith must precede miracles. Miracles alone do not provide a firm foundation for faith.

Brigham Young said: *"Miracles, or these extraordinary manifestations of the power of God, are not for the unbeliever; they are to console the Saints, and to strengthen and confirm the faith of those who love, fear, and serve God"* (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1941], 341).

Questions for thought:

Why are the miracles that Jesus performed during his mortal life important to you?

Why is it important to know that he continues to perform miracles today?

Conclusion

The Savior can heal both spiritual and physical infirmities. We should be thankful for all that he has done for us. Silently ponder the miracles you have experienced, then recognize and give thanks for miracles in your life.

The Sermon on the Mount: “A More Excellent Way”

Lesson 8 Matthew 5

Introduction

The scriptures include many invitations from the Savior. For instance, read the Savior’s invitations in **Matthew 11:28-29**. Today’s lesson focuses on the Sermon on the Mount, which contains many invitations from the Savior—which should encourage us to come unto Christ by applying the principles he taught in the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus taught the Beatitudes to his disciples.

Many centuries after the premortal Christ gave the law of Moses on Mount Sinai, the mortal Messiah ascended another mount to proclaim a higher law in a discourse known as the Sermon on the Mount. The first teachings in this sermon are known as the Beatitudes, found in **Matthew 5:1-12**. The word *beatitude* comes from the Latin *beatus*, which means fortunate, happy, or blessed. Let’s review these teachings:

Matt. 5:3 To be “poor in spirit” means “to be humble”. It is important that we be humble so that we may be taught by the Spirit. Through activities such as prayer, scripture study, and service to others, we can strive to develop greater humility.

Matt. 5:4 reminds us that the Lord provides for us to be comforted. **John 14:26-27** and **Mosiah 18:8-9** provide examples of comfort.

Matt. 5:5 Meekness means that we are to be gentle, forgiving, or benevolent as shown in **Mosiah 3:19; Alma 7:23; and Alma 13:28**.

Matt. 5:6 Jesus promised those who “hunger and thirst after righteousness” that they will be filled. Of course, it is up to us to lift our appetites from the things of the world to things of righteousness. **3 Nephi 12:6** clarifies the promise—that we will be filled “with the Holy Ghost”.

Matt. 5:7 Just as we need mercy from the Lord, we need to extend mercy to others by being understanding of human failures, being forgiving even at times when others may not seem to be worthy of forgiveness or mercy. **Alma 42:13-15** reminds us that all mankind are fallen.

Matt. 5:8 reminds us that we need to have a pure heart and in **Helaman 3:35**, we are given instruction on how to purify our hearts—by yielding our hearts to God. Remember too that we must have pure hearts if we are to see God and dwell with him—See **Moses 6:57**.

Matt. 5:9 If we wish to be the children of God, we must be peacemakers in our homes and communities.

Matt. 5:10 In this world, righteous people sometimes persecuted. How we should respond to persecution is taught in both **Matt. 5:44** and **Luke 6:35**.

Jesus declared that his disciples are “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world.”

Matt. 5:13 Jesus said that his disciples are “the salt of the earth”. In modern day scripture in **D&C 101:39**, he repeated that concept. Salt is useful as a seasoning—

bringing out the best and making things flavorful—and as a preservative—prolonging or enhancing usefulness. **D&C 103:9-10** adds insight about what it means to be “the salt of the earth” and how we can be “the saviors of men” by providing needed services such as sharing the gospel and doing temple work.

Matt. 5:14 and **16** remind us that Latter-day Saints can be “the light of the world”. When a candle is placed “under a bushel”, its light is hidden and its utility is diminished significantly.

As Church members we sometimes put our light under a bushel when we could let our light shine in a way that would lead others to “glorify [our] Father ... in heaven”. We have been taught that Jesus is the light that we should hold up in **3 Nephi 18:24**.

Jesus taught a higher law than the law of Moses.

Matt. 5:17-18 Jesus said that he came to fulfill the law of Moses, not to destroy it. The law of Moses had been “*given to the children of Israel, ... for they were a stiffnecked people, quick to do iniquity, and slow to remember the Lord their God.*” It was “*a law of performances and of ordinances, ... which [the Israelites] were to observe strictly from day to day, to keep them in remembrance of God and their duty towards him*” (Mosiah 13:29-30). Those who understood the law “[looked] forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law [was] fulfilled. For, for this end was the law given” (2 Nephi 25:24-25).

Alma 34:13-16 The Savior fulfilled the law of Moses when he atoned for our sins. After the Atonement, the people were no longer commanded to make animal sacrifices, which had been required as part of the law of Moses to point to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Instead, the people were commanded to “offer for a sacrifice ... a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 9:20).

Matt. 5:20 Jesus said that his disciples’ righteousness should “exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees”. While they focused only on outward appearances of the law, the importance of inner faithfulness was lacking from the “righteousness” of the scribes and Pharisees. If they had observed the law as it was given, they would have recognized Jesus as the Messiah.

“*Ye have heard that it was said...*” In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus used these words when he referred to commandments that were part of the law of Moses.

“*But I say unto you..*” Jesus used these words when he taught his disciples his higher law.

Contrast these teachings of the Law of Moses and Christ’s teachings:

“Ye have heard that it was said...” (Law of Moses)	“But I say unto you...” (Christ’s higher law)
<i>Thou shalt not kill</i> (See Matt 5:21)	Do not get angry (see Matt. 5:22) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ feelings of anger affect our relationship with God ▪ eliminate such feelings from our lives
Bring a “gift to the altar” / Offer sacrifice (5:23)	Reconcile with thy brother first (5:23)
Thou shalt not commit adultery (5:27)	Avoid lustful thoughts (5:28) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ also see Mosiah 4:30 ▪ and Alma 12:14

Perform oaths to the Lord (5:33)	Keep your word (5:34-37) Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: “Under the Mosaic law the taking of oaths was so common and covered such a variety of circumstances that, in practice, little verity attended statements that were not made with an oath. ... Under the perfect law of Christ every man’s word is his bond, and all spoken statements are as true as though an oath attended each spoken word” (<i>The Mortal Messiah</i> , 4 vols. [1979-81], 2:140).
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Commenting on Matt. 5:48, President Joseph Fielding Smith said: *“I believe the Lord meant just what he said: that we should be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect. That will not come all at once, but line upon line, and precept upon precept, example upon example, and even then not as long as we live in this mortal life, for we will have to go even beyond the grave before we reach that perfection and shall be like God. But here we lay the foundation. Here is where we are taught these simple truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ, in this probationary state, to prepare us for that perfection. It is our duty to be better today than we were yesterday, and better tomorrow than we are today. ... If we are keeping the commandments of the Lord, we are on that road to perfection”* (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954-56], 2:18-19)

As you can see from our review of some of the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, they help us “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him”.

Conclusion

The teachings in the Sermon on the Mount help us “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him”, so our challenge is to apply those teachings effectively in our lives. Consider carefully the invitations you have seen in the Sermon on the Mount listed and choose one or two to focus on during the coming week.

“Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God”

Lesson 9 – Matthew 6-7

Introduction

Elder William R. Bradford of the Seventy once spoke with the bishop of a ward whose youth had worked to earn money for an activity. The bishop asked Elder Bradford if he would help the youth get some recognition for what they had done. To the bishop’s surprise, Elder Bradford said he would not. He said that he was glad that the young people had worked hard, but that it was not important that they receive public recognition for that work. When the youth decided to donate their money to the Church’s general missionary fund instead of using it for the activity, they wanted to have their picture taken with Elder Bradford as they made the donation, and they wanted to have the picture and an article put into the newspaper. Again Elder Bradford surprised them by saying “no.” He told the bishop: “You might consider helping your young people learn a higher law of recognition. Recognition from on high is silent. It is carefully and quietly recorded there. Let them feel the joy and gain the treasure in their heart and soul that come from silent, selfless service” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 75).

One lesson we can learn from Elder Bradford’s response to the youth is that we should do good things because we love God and want to please him, not because we want to receive recognition from other people. This is one of the characteristics of a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

As we discuss the Sermon on the Mount, list the qualities of true discipleship taught by the Savior in this sermon and consider what you need to do to become a more dedicated and sincere disciple of Christ.

True disciples do the right things for right reasons.

Matt. 6:1-2, 5, 16 Jesus condemned some people for doing good things such as giving alms (giving to the poor), praying, and fasting. Why? Because they were doing these things for the wrong reasons. Jesus referred to these people as hypocrites—people who pretended to have certain qualities when they do not have them; people who try to appear righteous but are not.

Matt. 6:2, 5, 16 The reward for people who do good things to be seen by others is that they will be seen by others. To please God, we must purify our motives for serving and performing other good works.

Matt. 6:19-21 In this sermon, Jesus taught about what we should value most—“... treasures in heaven”. For two examples of heavenly treasures, see **D&C 18:14-16**(salvation for our brothers & sisters); **D&C 130:18-19** (knowledge and intelligence).

“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” To determine what you treasure, evaluate the amount of time, money, and thought you devote to something. Think about the things you treasure and consider what these treasures say about where your heart is.

True disciples follow the Savior's example of prayer.

Matt. 6:9-13 is known as the Lord's Prayer. Consider what it teaches us about how we to pray.

The Lord's Prayer shows Jesus' reverence and respect for Heavenly Father.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks commented on the kind of language we should use when we pray: *"The special language of prayer follows different forms in different languages, but the principle is always the same. We should address prayers to our Heavenly Father in words which speakers of that language associate with love and respect and reverence and closeness. ... Men and women who wish to show respect will take the time to learn the special language of prayer"* (Ensign, May 1993, 16, 18).

Matt. 6:7 counsels us to avoid using "vain repetitions" when we pray.

Matt. 6:8 Heavenly Father knows what we need before we pray, but the practice of asking, seeking, and knocking (Matt. 7:7) is necessary for our spiritual progress.

Matt. 7:8 The Savior's promise that "every one that asketh receiveth" does not mean that we always receive what we ask for or at the time we ask for it or in the way we would like it. See **3 Nephi 18:20** for clarification of the promise. After all, God knows what is best for each of us.

True disciples treat others kindly and fairly.

The Savior commands us to forgive others, so ask yourself—"How can I become more forgiving?"

Matt. 7:1 The Joseph Smith Translation reads, "Judge not unrighteously, that ye be not judged; but judge righteous judgment". Righteous judgment requires that we see clearly and we cannot do that while sins cloud our vision. **Moroni 7:14-18** teaches us how to judge and avoid unrighteous judgment.

Matt. 7:4-5 Jesus said a person who unrighteously tries to correct others is a hypocrite; so judging unrighteously is a sign of hypocrisy.

Matt. 7:12 is often called the "Golden Rule" and following it can make us better disciples of Jesus Christ.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton described a meeting in which a group of Church members considered the question "How can you tell if someone is converted to Jesus Christ?" "For forty-five minutes those in attendance made numerous suggestions in response to this question, and the leader carefully wrote down each answer on a large chalkboard. All of the comments were thoughtful and appropriate. But after a time, this great teacher erased everything he had written. Then, acknowledging that all of the comments had been worthwhile and appreciated, he taught a vital principle: 'The best and most clear indicator that we are progressing spiritually and coming unto Christ is the way we treat other people.' " **Elder Ashton added:** "The way we treat the members of our families, our friends, those with whom we work each day is as important as are some of the more noticeable gospel principles we sometimes emphasize" (Ensign, May 1992, 20).

The following story illustrates how the Prophet Joseph Smith taught one sister to look for the beam in her own eye when dealing with a personal offense:

A woman went to the Prophet Joseph Smith upset about some things another member of the Church had said about her. The Prophet told her that if what the man had said was untrue, she should ignore the matter, because truth would survive but untruths would not. The woman felt the comments were untrue, but she was not satisfied with ignoring the matter. The Prophet then told his way of handling such comments: *“When an enemy had told a scandalous story about him, which had often been done, before he rendered judgment he paused and let his mind run back to the time and place and setting of the story to see if he had not by some unguarded word or act laid the block on which the story was built. If he found that he had done so, he said that in his heart he then forgave his enemy, and felt thankful that he had received warning of a weakness that he had not known he possessed.”* The Prophet told the sister that she should think carefully about whether she had unconsciously given the man any reason to say the things he did. After much thought, she decided she had, and she thanked the Prophet and left. (See Jesse W. Crosby, quoted in Hyrum L. Andrus and Helen Mae Andrus, comps., *They Knew the Prophet* [1974], 144.)

True disciples serve God and do his will.

Matt. 6:24 teaches that it is impossible to serve both God and mammon, or worldliness? Blessings God promises to those who serve him are found in **Matt. 6:25-33** and **D&C 11:7**.

Matt. 6:33 Jesus promised that if we “seek ... first the kingdom of God,” we will be given all other things that we need. Many of us have gained a testimony of this promise. Worldliness turns our loyalty and service away from God. Some ways in which we might be tempted to seek the things of the world before the things of God include waiting to pay tithing until after we buy the things we need or want or deciding not to serve a mission because of a desire for worldly things.

Matt. 7:13-14 As Jesus neared the end of his sermon; he taught that entering the kingdom of heaven required one to enter at the strait gate and the narrow way.

Conclusion

It is vitally important to follow Jesus Christ. As you ponder the message of this lesson, consider what you need to do to become a better disciple of Christ.

“Take My Yoke upon You, and Learn of Me”

Lesson 10 – Matthew 11:28-30; 12:1-13; Luke 7:36-50; 13:10-17

Introduction

If you were called forward today in class and we progressively filled your arms with a larger and larger stack of books until your carrying capacity was reached, how far could you carry that burden before stopping to rest? What arrangements would you have to make to carry the burden a great distance? There are many kinds of loads, or burdens. Some are physical, while others are spiritual or emotional and therefore, they are not as easily seen. Many unseen burdens can exceed our strength to bear them alone, and we become weary.

This lesson discusses how the Lord can lighten our burdens and bring us rest. We are promised that as we take the Savior’s yoke upon us and do his will, we will find the peace and joy that he has promised.

Jesus invited us to take his yoke upon us and learn of him.

Matt. 11:28 The Savior invites those who *“labour and are heavy laden”* to come unto Him. This applies to those who bear physical, emotional, or spiritual burdens. The Lord can “give [us] rest” from these burdens by giving us comfort, guidance, forgiveness, and inspiration as we let him direct our lives.

A yoke is a frame or bar that can be placed on one or two people or animals pulling or carrying a heavy load. The yoke balances the burden and makes it easier to manage. In addition to its literal meaning, the concept of a yoke also appears in many scriptures as a metaphor for bondage or servitude (see **Jeremiah 28:2; Alma 44:2**). To take Christ’s yoke upon us means that we will humbly do his will and allow him to guide and direct our lives.

Matt. 11:30 The Lord states, *“My yoke is easy, and my burden is light”*. The Savior’s yoke is easy in the sense that it is shared with the Lord and he can compensate for our lack of capacity and inability. Some people think that the Lord’s teachings are too restrictive and that that is in itself a burden, but when we realize that obeying and serving the Lord makes our burdens light by avoiding the consequences of sin and the associated guilt, the yoke is truly easy.

Jesus declared that he is Lord of the Sabbath.

Matt. 12:1-2 The Pharisees condemned their actions when they saw Jesus’ disciples pick corn on the Sabbath. The Pharisees’ interpretation of the Mosaic law ignored the true spirit and purpose of the Sabbath and instead focused on traditions that greatly restricted Sabbath activities.

Matt. 12:3-8 The Lord taught from a different perspective as he responded to their accusations.

Matt. 12:7 What Jesus meant when he said, *“I will have mercy, and not sacrifice”* was that He wanted the people to focus on loving others, not merely on performing public religious ceremonies. This principle should guide our Sabbath activities.

Matt. 12:10-13; Luke 13:10-17 Jesus taught about the purpose of the Sabbath when he healed the man with the withered hand and the woman bound by an infirmity—teaching that doing well and doing godly service to others is acceptable on the Sabbath. The Savior also taught about the Sabbath in **Mark 2:27-28** (The Joseph Smith Translation of **Mark 2:26** explains that the Sabbath was given as a “day of rest” and a day to “glorify God.”)

Think about what you can do on the Sabbath day to glorify God.

Consider how keeping the Sabbath day holy can make our burdens light and bring us rest.

Jesus forgave a woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee.

Luke 7:37 The woman who entered the house of Simon the Pharisee carried the burden of sin. **Luke 7:36; 7:44-50** The woman did that which allowed Jesus to take away her burden by showing love and having faith.

Consider what you can do so that the Savior can remove the burden of sin from our lives.

The sinful woman and Simon the Pharisee differed in their attitudes toward Jesus:

- The woman demonstrated repentance, respect, humility, and love.
- Simon attitude reflected pride, lack of courtesy, and a judgmental attitude.

Elder James E. Talmage taught: “It was a custom of the times to treat a distinguished guest with marked attention; to receive him with a kiss of welcome, to provide water for washing the dust from his feet, and oil for anointing the hair of the head and the beard. All these courteous attentions were omitted by Simon” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 261).

The qualities that the woman possessed are important as we repent and seek forgiveness, so they lighten our burden.

The qualities that Simon possessed keep us from repenting and thereby increase our burden. Simon’s attitude toward the woman would have made her burden seem heavier. We can learn from the Savior’s response to the woman.

Luke 7:37 Even though she had not been invited and would risk being treated unkindly by Simon and his household, the woman came directly to Christ as soon as she knew where to find him.

We can learn from her example that we need to seek Christ regardless of the obstacles that might keep us from repenting and coming unto Christ.

Luke 7:41-50 We learn from the parable of the two debtors who were forgiven their debts.

Luke 7:44-50 (with emphasis on verse 47-48) Sin is comparable to debt. Having Christ as our “creditor” makes our burdens light because he is willing to forgive as we repent and change our lives to be more worthy.

Conclusion

We can choose to take upon ourselves the burdens of the world or the yoke of Jesus Christ’s teachings are true and we will find rest when we follow him. Learn of Christ and obey his teachings so that you can find rest and peace.

Additional Teachings in these scriptures:

The importance of unity

Matt. 12:22-30 We are sometimes divided against ourselves in our families, homes, or wards. The Savior's counsels us here to eliminate division and become more united.

Matt. 12:30 Jesus told the Pharisees, "He that is not with me is against me". This is so because this life is a test involving choices—and we must choose the Lord's way or the way of the world—we cannot avoid a choice. A choice not to choose is a choice against the Lord's way.

"Every idle word" (Matt. 12:36)

Matt. 12:33-37 The words we speak reveal a great deal about us. Jesus placed high importance on the words we speak. When He referred to "idle words", that may include sarcasm, gossip, lies, profanity, and rudeness.

Consider how you might strengthen your commitment to speak only in good ways.

“He Spake Many Things unto Them in Parables”

Lesson 11 - Matthew 13

Introduction

Imagine that you are riding in a bus with many other passengers. As the journey progresses, you each look through the windows of the bus and observe the scenery. After traveling together in the same bus, will you have observed the same things as the other passengers? Probably not.

People in the same situation do not always observe the same things. Likewise, not all the people who heard Jesus teach in parables understood how the parables applied to them. This lesson will discuss how we can understand and apply Jesus' parables.

Jesus presented the parable of the sower and explained his use of parables.

When the multitudes gathered on the seashore, Jesus “spake many things unto them in parables” (Matt. 13:3). A parable is a symbolic story that teaches gospel truths by comparing them to earthly things. Jesus said that his purpose in teaching with parables was to simultaneously teach his message to his disciples and conceal it from unbelievers. (See Matt. 13:10-13; note the Joseph Smith Translation of Matt. 13:12 footnote 12a.)

Matt. 13:3-8 records the parable of the sower

Matt. 13:4 Seeds that fell on the wayside—eaten by birds.

Matt. 13:5-6; Luke 8:6 Seeds in stony places—have no root.

Matt. 13:7 Seeds among thorns—choked by thorns.

Matt. 13:8 Seeds in good soil—bring forth fruit.

People might react in varied ways if they heard this parable without any explanation of its meaning. Some people might become frustrated because they do not understand it. Others might understand it but think it does not apply to them. Others might ponder it and ask questions until they understand it and know how to apply it in their lives.

Matt. 13:9 Jesus extended an invitation after he presented the parable of the sower in this verse. Think about what the word *hear* means in this invitation and what it means to see but see not and to hear but hear not. (See Matt. 13:13-15.)

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: *“The multitude ... received not His saying ... because they were not willing to see with their eyes, and hear with their ears; not because they could not, and were not privileged to see and hear, but because their hearts were full of iniquity and abominations. ... The very reason why the multitude ... did not receive an explanation upon His parables, was because of unbelief”*
(*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 96-97).

Jesus explained the parable of the sower.

Now let's discuss the meaning of the objects and actions in the parable of the sower.

Seed = word of God.

See **Matt. 13:19; Luke 8:11**

Wayside = people who hear the word of God but do not understand it

There are some things that we might do that prevent us from understanding God's word:

Mosiah 26:1-3 provides for one possible example involving the rising generation.

Alma 32:27 reminds us of what we must do to be able to understand the word of God.

Matt. 13:19 Lack of understanding makes it easier for Satan to take away the word from our hearts.

Stony places = people who hear and receive the word of God but do not allow it to take root in them.

Matt. 13:20-21; Mark 4:5 Some people do not allow the word of God to take root in them.

Alma 32:41-43 We allow the word to establish deep roots in us by nourishing it with faith, great diligence, patience and long-suffering. These string roots will help us endure the heat of tribulation, persecution, and offense.

Thorny places = people who hear the word of God but are distracted by the cares of the world.

Matt. 13:22; Mark 4:19; Luke 8:14—Sometimes a person may be unfruitful. “Thorns” cause people to be unfruitful; thorns such as worldly cares, riches, lusts, and pleasures of this life. Obviously, these thorns are evident in the world today. Our challenge is to determine what we can do to prevent these thorns from choking the word of God in us.

Good ground = people who hear the word of God, understand it, and do works of righteousness.

See **Matt. 13:23**.

Some actions could be taken to help the unproductive areas produce fruit:

The wayside could be plowed and fertilized, the stones could be removed, and the thorns could be uprooted.

Applying this to our efforts to be more receptive to God’s word could mean that we spend more effort on gospel study and Church activity, repent to remove our sins, and redirect our minds and hearts away from the worldly toward that which is of eternal value.

Give some thought to why the parable of the sower focuses more on the ground than on the sower or the seed.

Jesus used parables to teach about the kingdom of heaven on earth (the Church of Jesus Christ).

As we review Matt. 13:24-53, remember that in these verses the term “kingdom of heaven” refers to the Church of Jesus Christ, which is the kingdom of heaven on earth (Bible Dictionary, “Kingdom of Heaven or Kingdom of God,” 721).

Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43; and D&C 86:1-7 record the parable of the wheat and the tares, the Savior’s explanation of the parable to his disciples, and the Savior’s explanation as given to the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Matt. 13:27-30 In the parable of the wheat and the tares, the sower refused to let his servants immediately gather the tares, or weeds. **D&C 86:5-7** clarifies why that was so.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven are about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 98-100).

Matt. 13:31-32 We learn from this that the restored Church in the latter days, will grow from humble circumstances to be the greatest of all and become home to many in need of shelter.

Matt. 13:33 *Leaven* is an ingredient, such as yeast or baking powder, that causes bread to rise. In this comparison, the work of God increases as it is introduced to others who benefit from it.

Matt. 13:44-46 teaches the parables of the treasure and the pearl of great price, reminding us that:

We should be willing to sacrifice all we have to obtain the treasure of the gospel.

We should not only remember sacrifices that we or those we know have made for the gospel, but also the blessings that have resulted from those sacrifices.

Matt. 13:47 The net in the parable of the net cast into the sea represents the church that offers the gospel message to many different kinds of people. The gathering of the good into vessels and casting the bad away reminds us that there will be a final judgment when we will be judged on what we have become. (See Matt. 13:48-50. Note: Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:4 explains that “the end of the world” in verse 49 refers to the destruction of the wicked.)

Consider what you need to do to help you stay faithful in the Church and to help others do the same.

Conclusion

Jesus explained his parables to those who sought understanding. As we study Jesus' parables with a sincere desire to understand, we will see how they apply in our day.

“I Am the Bread of Life”

Lesson 12 – John 5; Mark 6:30-44; Matthew 14:22-33

Introduction

What do “rock”, “light”, and “bread” have in common? Well, Helaman 5:12 refers to Jesus Christ as “the rock”. Then, John 8:12 records that Jesus declared that he is “the light of the world.” Later in this lesson we will discuss how Jesus is “the bread of life” (John 6:35).

Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath and declared himself the Son of God.

John 5:1-9 provides an account of Jesus healing a man at the pool of Bethesda. Elder Boyd K. Packer used this account to emphasize that we should help people who have disabilities. He said bodies and minds with disabilities “will be made perfect. In the meantime, we must look after those who wait by the pool of Bethesda” (*Ensign*, May 1991, 9).

John 5:14 Jesus gave instructions to the man when he saw him in the temple later that day to “sin no more”. The effects of sin are “a worse thing” than physical infirmities because physical infirmities will not stand between us and our Father, but sin certainly does.

John 5:16-18 The Jewish leaders sought to kill Jesus because he had healed the man on the Sabbath and then had “[made] himself equal to God by referring to God as his father.

John 5:19-23, 30 As Jesus responded to the angry Jews, he revealed some things about his relationship to the Father:

- **John 5:20** Jesus told the people that he would soon do even “greater works” than healing the sick.
- **John 5:21-29** He said that these greater works would include: bringing to pass the Resurrection, judging all people, and giving everlasting life to the faithful.

John 5:32-39, 45-47 The Savior said witnesses testified of him including his works and His Father.

Jacob 4:6 It is important to have these witnesses so that we might obtain a hope and develop an unshakable faith in the Savior. Of course, we too should be witnesses of the Savior.

John 5:39 Jesus challenged the Jewish leaders to “search the scriptures”. We know that there is a significant difference between searching the scriptures and reading them. If we simply see and process the letters into words and the words into sentences, we’ve read the scripture, but that doesn’t mean that we’ve truly understood its meaning and significance.

Think about how you have made your personal and family scripture study more meaningful through searching the scriptures and how you have been blessed as you did so.

John 5:39 According to this verse, if the Jewish leaders had searched and believed the scriptures, they would have known that the scriptures testify of Jesus Christ. (See also

John 5:40, 46-47.) The scriptures should also strengthen your faith in Christ as you search them.

Jesus miraculously fed more than 5,000 people.

John 6:1-3 (note: the Joseph Smith Translation of Mark 6:31 in footnote 31 a, says that Jesus and his disciples went to a solitary place.) Jesus and his disciples went up into a mountain.

Mark 6:33-34; Matt. 14:14 record how Jesus responded when the multitude came to him—with compassion.

John 6:5-13 (see also Matt. 14:21) records how Jesus fed the multitude. As you read it, think about how we can follow the example of the boy who gave his loaves and fishes to Jesus. The Lord blesses us when we, like the boy, give whatever we have in His service.

Elder James E. Faust said: *“Many nameless people with gifts equal only to five loaves and two small fishes magnify their callings and serve without attention or recognition, feeding literally thousands. ... These are the hundreds of thousands of leaders and teachers in all of the auxiliaries and priesthood quorums, the home teachers, the Relief Society visiting teachers. These are the many humble bishops in the Church, some without formal training but greatly magnified, always learning, with a humble desire to serve the Lord and the people of their wards.*

...
“A major reason this church has grown from its humble beginnings to its current strength is the faithfulness and devotion of millions of humble and devoted people who have only five loaves and two small fishes to offer in the service of the Master. They have largely surrendered their own interests and in so doing have found ‘the peace of God, which passeth all understanding’ (Philip 4:7)” (Ensign, May 1994, 5-6).

Jesus walked on the sea, invited Peter to come to him, and calmed the winds.

After Jesus fed the multitudes, he instructed his disciples to get into a ship and go to the other side of the sea. He then sent the multitudes away and went up a mountain to pray. As the disciples were crossing the sea, they were caught in strong winds.

Matt. 14:26; John 6:19 The disciples reacted with fear when they saw Jesus walking toward them on the water.

Matt. 14:27; John 6:20 shows how Jesus responded to their fears.

Matt. 14:28-29 records Peter’s request when he heard the Savior’s voice.

Matt. 14:30 Peter’s faith faltered as he walked on the water.

Matt. 14:30-32 gives the account of what Peter did when he began to sink and how the Savior responded. For us there is a lesson here about our relationship with the Lord. Each of us has had experiences that have tested our faith and times when we have felt the Savior strengthen us and calm our fears.

Jesus declared that he is “the bread of life.”

John 6:26 The day after Jesus’ miracle with the loaves and fishes, the people followed him to Capernaum and this verse tells why they followed him.

John 6:27-35 (Note that the word *meat* in verse 27 means food.) Jesus used the people's excitement about the previous day's miracle to testify of his mission.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland observed: *"During the Savior's Galilean ministry, He chided those who had heard of Him feeding the 5,000 with only five barley loaves and two fishes, and now flocked to Him expecting a free lunch. That food, important as it was, was incidental to the real nourishment He was trying to give them"* (Ensign, Nov. 1997, 65).

John 6:35, 47-51 "Bread of life" is an appropriate description of the Savior and the blessings he offers us. Think about what it means to "never hunger" and "never thirst".

John 6:47, John 6:51-54; Matt. 26:26-28; Alma 5:33-35; D&C 20:77 provide instruction on how we can partake of the "bread of life".

President Howard W. Hunter counseled: *"We must know Christ better than we know him; we must remember him more often than we remember him; we must serve him more valiantly than we serve him. Then we will drink water springing up unto eternal life and will eat the bread of life"* (Ensign, May 1994, 64).

John 6:42 Some people did not believe Jesus because they saw him only as "the son of Joseph".

John 6:51-66 Some who had claimed to be Jesus' disciples murmured and turned away from him, saying that they did not understand the spiritual meanings of his declaration that he was the bread of life and his teaching about the need to eat his flesh and drink his blood.

John 6:67 When some people rejected Jesus' sermon, Jesus asked the Twelve Apostles about what they would do.

John 6:68-69 Peter's response is significant and these verses show that Peter and the other Apostles understood something about Jesus that those who left did not understand.

Conclusion

Jesus Christ is "the bread of life" and he has "the words of eternal life" (John 6:35, 68). Consider applying his promises from the Sermon on the Bread of Life: "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. ... He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (John 6:35, 47).

“I Will Give unto Thee the Keys of the Kingdom”

Lesson 13 – Matthew 15:21-17:9

Introduction

Many years ago President Spencer W. Kimball and several other Church leaders visited the small cathedral in Copenhagen, Denmark, that houses Bertel Thorvaldsen’s famous statues of Jesus Christ and the Twelve Apostles. Speaking of this experience, Elder Rex D. Pinegar said: *“As we looked at those beautiful works of art we noted that Peter was sculptured with large keys in his hands. ... As we were ready to leave the cathedral, the Danish caretaker ... was standing near the door awaiting our departure. President Kimball shook his hand [and] thanked him for his kindness in letting us visit the cathedral. Then the president began an explanation of the church established by Jesus Christ and of its importance to us. ... Gathering President Tanner, Elder Monson, and Elder Packer closer to him, the president continued, ‘We are living apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are Twelve Apostles and three others who are the presidency of the Church. We hold the real keys, as Peter did, and we use them every day. They are in use constantly’ ”* (Ensign, Nov. 1976, 69). This lesson discusses priesthood keys and how Peter received them on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Note: Take a moment to turn to the maps in the scriptures to the map of Palestine. The events discussed in this lesson occurred in Tyre, Sidon, Decapolis, and Caesarea Philippi. Jesus’ travels in this area brought him into contact with many Gentiles (non-Israelites).

Jesus healed the daughter of a Gentile and fed more than 4,000 people.

Matt. 15:22 The woman from Canaan asked Jesus to help her daughter.

Matt. 15:24 Jesus did not grant her request immediately because she was not a Jew, and the blessings of the gospel were to be offered to the Jews before the Gentiles.

Matt. 15:28 Jesus finally healed the woman’s daughter. From this woman we can learn that those who do not have the gospel fulness may nevertheless have great faith, and that we should not lose faith when blessings are not granted as quickly as we wish.

Mark 7:31 The Savior departed for the Sea of Galilee, traveling through Decapolis. Decapolis was an area east of the Sea of Galilee where many Gentiles lived.

Matt. 15:29-31 The Lord showed compassion for the people there who needed healing.

Matt. 15:31 records the multitude’s reaction as they glorified God. (Miracles in our day should cause us to glorify God.)

The multitude stayed with Jesus for three days, and when it was time for them to leave, Jesus did not want to send them away hungry.

Matt. 15:32-38 records the miracle he performed for them.

This miracle was different from the earlier feeding of the 5,000 (Matt. 14:15-21) in that many of these people were Gentiles. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained that with the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus “was laying the foundation for his incomparable sermon on the Bread of Life” (John 6:22-69). With the later feeding of the 4,000, Jesus was symbolically teaching that in the future, living bread would be offered to the Gentile nations. (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1966-73], 1:375.)

Peter was promised the keys of the kingdom.

Matt. 16:15 Jesus left Decapolis and went to the area of Caesarea Philippi, where he asked his disciples an important question.

Matt. 16:16 Peter's response testified of Christ's mission.

Matt. 16:17 indicates the source of Peter's testimony. We learn from this account that our testimonies are given to us by personal revelation.

Matt. 16:18 Jesus said to Peter, "Upon this rock I will build my church". The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the rock Jesus referred to is revelation (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 274). Revelation is the foundation of the Lord's Church today as the work is guided by his apostles who are called to lead the Church in our day.

Matt. 16:19 The Savior promised to give Peter the "keys of the kingdom of heaven".

D&C 128:9-10; D&C 132:46 tell us what these keys are and why they are necessary.

President Joseph F. Smith taught: "*The Priesthood in general is the authority given to man to act for God. Every man ordained to any degree of the Priesthood, has this authority delegated to him. ...But it is necessary that every act performed under this authority shall be done at the proper time and place, in the proper way, and after the proper order. The power of directing these labors constitutes the keys of the Priesthood. In their fulness, the keys are held by only one person at a time, the prophet and president of the Church. He may delegate any portion of this power to another, in which case that person holds the keys of that particular labor*" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 136).

A conviction that the prophet holds these keys today is an essential part of our testimonies.

Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John.

About a week after Peter was promised the keys of the kingdom, he, James, and John witnessed the Transfiguration of the Savior and received important knowledge and keys. This was one of the most significant events in the New Testament. It helped prepare Jesus for his Atonement and fortified the three Apostles for the additional responsibilities they would soon have as leaders of the Church.

Transfiguration means a temporary change in a person's appearance and nature; a transformation to a more glorified state. It is brought about by the power of God. (See D&C 67:11; Moses 1:11.)

According to **Matt. 17:1-5**, when Jesus, Peter, James, and John were on the Mount of Transfiguration, the following events happened:

- Jesus' face shone like the sun, and his clothing became brilliantly white.
- Moses and Elias (Elijah; see footnote 3b) appeared.
- "A bright cloud overshadowed them," and they heard the voice of the Father bear witness of his Son.

The name *Elias* is used several ways in the scriptures:

- In **Matt. 17:3-4** it is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name *Elijah*.
- In other places such as **Matt. 17:10-13**, it is used as a title describing a forerunner, or preparer.

Latter-day prophets have taught more about what happened on the Mount of Transfiguration:

- **D&C 63:20-21** Peter, James, and John saw a vision of the transfiguration of the earth at the Savior's Second Coming.
- They were "transfigured before [Christ]" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 158).
- **Luke 9:31 JST** - They were taught about the Savior's death and resurrection.

- They received from Jesus, Moses, and Elijah the priesthood keys they would need to govern the Church after the Savior's death (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 158; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols. [1954-56], 2:110).

In 1836 Moses and Elijah returned again to the earth. They laid their hands on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to restore the same keys given to Peter, James, and John:

D&C 110:11 Moses restored the keys of the gathering of Israel.

D&C 110:13-16 Elijah restored the keys of the sealing power. These keys are used today in missionary work and temple work—conducted under the direction of the President of the Church.

Elder David B. Haight taught that Jesus' Transfiguration "was meant for our spiritual enlightenment as well as for those who were personal witnesses" (*Ensign*, May 1977, 7).

Elder Haight presented the following ideas about what we can learn from the Transfiguration to help us when we need spiritual strength (*Ensign*, May 1977, 7-9):

- We should follow the Savior's example by praying fervently when we need spiritual strength (Luke 9:28). Speaking of the Transfiguration, Elder Haight said: "*Perhaps Jesus felt not only a sense of the heavenly calm which that solitary opportunity for communion with His Father would bring, but even more, a sense that He would be supported in the coming hour by ministrations not of this earth. ... As He prayed to His Father, He was elevated far above the doubt and wickedness of the world which had rejected Him.*"
- We can have the assurance that Jesus will strengthen us as he did Peter, James, and John. Elder Haight said, "*He took His three apostles with Him in the belief that they, after having seen His glory ... might be fortified, that their faith might be strengthened to prepare them for the insults and humiliating events which were to follow.*"
- We can be strengthened by testimony of the Savior (Matt. 17:5) and by the doctrines of the gospel. Elder Haight said, "*The three chosen apostles were taught of [the Savior's] coming death and also His resurrection, teachings that would strengthen each of them in the eventful days ahead.*"

Conclusion

As Latter-day Saints we have information to help us understand what took place on the Mount of Transfiguration. We are truly blessed to have revelation in the Church today that is made available through the priesthood keys held by the appointed apostles and leaders who have been called to serve us. As saints, we, like Peter, can know through the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

“Who Is My Neighbour?”

Lesson 14 – Matthew 18; Luke 10

Introduction

Imagine that we’ve invited a parent of a young child (three to five years old) to bring their child to our Gospel Doctrine class, introduce him or her to us, and then briefly describe some of the child’s most admirable qualities. After the parent was finished, you would most likely note that the parent had described many of the childlike qualities that Jesus would want us, as adults, to have. This lesson discusses the importance of developing desirable childlike qualities and treating all people with humility and kindness.

Jesus taught that we must become as little children.

Matthew 18:1; Mark 9:33-34 As this scripture points out, the disciples were concerned about who would be the greatest in the Lord’s kingdom. That’s an error that one of us might make unless we learn to set aside such concerns.

Matt. 18:2-4; Mark 9:35 Jesus gave his counsel to those who desire to achieve true greatness in his kingdom, but due to our carnal natures, it is sometimes difficult to follow this counsel. Compare the Savior’s counsel with what the world teaches about how to achieve greatness.

Mosiah 3:19 To become as little children means that although children are not perfect, they have many qualities that we must develop to inherit the kingdom of heaven. These qualities include humility, meekness, and a willingness to believe. Think about what you have learned from children that helps you become more Christlike. Then consider ways in which you can become more childlike and more submissive to the will of our Father in Heaven.

Matt. 18:6 To “offend one of these little ones” means to cause to stumble. Some of the ways people cause children to stumble include being a poor example to them, criticizing them unkindly, failing to teach them, and abusing them.

Matt. 18:6 teaches us how seriously the Lord regards offenses against “little ones”. In condemnation of offending little ones, **Elder M. Russell Ballard** stated: *“We hear disturbing reports of parents or guardians who are so far removed from the Spirit of Christ that they abuse children. Whether this abuse is physical, verbal, or the less evident but equally severe emotional abuse, it is an abomination and a serious offense to God”* (Ensign, May 1991, 80).

Matt. 18:14 Being childlike ourselves can help us care for children. Consider carefully what you can do to carry out God’s will that “[not] one of these little ones should perish”.

Mark 10:13 Jesus’ disciples responded with rebukes when the little children were brought to him, drawing a response from the Messiah...

Mark 10:14-15 In seeing his disciples’ attitude and behavior, Jesus was “much displeased” and told them to let the children come to him unimpeded.

Mark 10:16 Jesus blessed the children and demonstrated his great love for them. Here, we see how compassionate he is toward the innocent and helpless. For us, this is an obvious example that we should follow at all times.

Through the parable of the unmerciful servant, Jesus taught about forgiveness.

Matt. 18:15 provides the Lord’s insightful teaching about what we should do if we have been offended by another. This is the best way to resolve disputes—privately and

quietly, without rancor, so that the offender and offended can be reconciled without pressure from others.

Matt. 18:22 Jesus responded when Peter asked how often he should forgive, using a very high number to teach that we should always forgive others. Is it sometimes difficult to forgive? Certainly! But then, consider carefully how you have been blessed as you have forgiven others or been forgiven by them.

Matt. 18:23-35 To further emphasize the importance of forgiving others, Jesus gave this parable of the unmerciful servant. In verse 35, the king represents Heavenly Father, and the servants represent us.

Matt. 18:24-27 We are like the king's servant in our debt to the Lord because we too are unable to pay the debt on our own. To be forgiven of our "debt", we must plead for mercy and comply with the Lord's conditions to achieve complete forgiveness.

Matt. 18:33 We learn from the king's example in forgiving others that it is always incumbent upon us to forgive just as we have been forgiven by our merciful Master.

Matt. 18:34-35 The danger of not forgiving others is that we may be treated by our own standards at the judgment day if we are not merciful and forgiving.

Other important verses in Matt. 18 include...

Matt. 18:8-9 and Mark 9:43-48 (see also Matt. 5:29-30). Consider the meaning of these verses. (See Matt. 18:9, footnote 9a) The Joseph Smith Translation identifies these offending elements as people who lead us astray. It is better to end our association with people than to allow them to lead us into sin. (See also Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 9:40-48.)

Matt. 18:11-JST records Jesus as saying that little children do not need repentance (footnote 11c) and **Moroni 8:11-12** teaches why this is so.

Moroni 8:12; D&C 29:46-47 Little children are "alive in Christ".

Matt. 18:4; Mosiah 3:19; Moroni 8:10 To become "alive in Christ", we must humble ourselves, yield to the Holy Spirit, become repentant, submissive, humble, meek, patient, and full of love, and completely submissive to the will of our Father.

Matt. 18:11-14 We are counseled to apply the parable of the lost sheep in our lives and consider how we, or someone we know, has been blessed by someone else who followed the principle of this parable.

Through the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus taught about charity

Luke 10:25-28 Note how Jesus responded to the lawyer who asked what he should do to inherit eternal life. The commandments to love God and our neighbors encompass all of the gospel, so it is essential that we obey these two commandments more fully to merit salvation.

Luke 10:29-37 Jesus responded with the parable of the Good Samaritan when the lawyer asked, "Who is my neighbor?" This parable teaches us who our neighbors are.

President Howard W. Hunter said: *"We need to remember that though we make our friends, God has made our neighbors—everywhere. Love should have no boundary; we should have no narrow loyalties"* (Ensign, Nov. 1986, 35).

Luke 10:31-32 The priest and Levite passed on the other side when they saw the man who had been robbed and wounded. People need help today, so what excuses might we give when we do not help others in need? (See **Mosiah 4:16-19** for one example.)

Luke 10:33-35 We are familiar with how the good Samaritan helped the man who had been robbed and wounded. He demonstrated many characteristics of a good neighbor. Take a moment to consider how you have been blessed by “good Samaritans” in your life.

Mosiah 4:26 teaches us how we can be “good Samaritans” by giving to the needy, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and ministering to them temporally and spiritually.

The sanctity of the marriage relationship

Matt. 19:1-12 (see also Mark 10:1-12) describes a situation in which the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus by asking him about the lawfulness of divorce. Divorce was a much-discussed issue among Jewish scholars and leaders, and the Pharisees hoped that Jesus’ answer to their question would allow them to stir up anger among the Jews.

Matt. 19:4-6 Jesus’ responded to the Pharisees that divorce was not ordained of God.

Matt. 19:7-8 Moses allowed divorce among the Israelites because of their hardness of hearts.

In ancient Israel, a man could put away, or divorce, his wife for insignificant reasons. Jesus taught that in a perfect world, such as the celestial kingdom, divorce does not exist. Because the earth is not yet perfect, divorce is allowed but should not happen except for the most serious reasons.

Matt. 19:9 indicates that a man who put away his wife for a frivolous reason was still married to her in the eyes of God, and he thus committed adultery if he married another woman. (See James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 473-75, 484; see also Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols. [1979-81], 2:138-39.)

Humility, forgiveness, and charity play important roles in a successful marriage. Striving to be Christlike helps us in marriage and other relationships.

Conclusion

It is vitally important that we follow the Savior’s example by humbling ourselves, forgiving others, and showing charity for one another

“I Am the Light of the World”

Lesson 15 – John 7

Introduction

Imagine that we have made the room as dark as possible by turning off the lights and closing any curtains or blinds. Now, in the darkened room, read Doctrine and Covenants 93:1-2. Is it difficult to read these verses in the dark? Certainly. More light would obviously make it much easier, so imagine that we turn on the lights and open the curtains or blinds. Now read Doctrine and Covenants 93:1-2. Light is used throughout the scriptures as a symbol for Jesus Christ. Jesus himself used this symbol while teaching in the temple. This lesson will discuss the ways in which Jesus Christ is a light for us. Today’s lesson also teaches that Jesus Christ is our Savior and that by following him we can gain true freedom.

Jesus attended the Feast of Tabernacles and taught in the temple.

The Feast of Tabernacles was an annual Jewish feast held six months after the Feast of the Passover. It lasted eight days and commemorated the Lord’s blessings to the children of Israel during their travels in the wilderness. It also celebrated the year’s harvest and marked the end of the harvest season. The Jews considered this feast the greatest and most joyful of all their feasts. (See Bible Dictionary, “Feasts,” 673; see also Lev. 23:34-43.)

John 7:1-10 Jesus traveled from Galilee to Jerusalem to attend this feast at the temple.

John 7:12 The people at the feast murmured about Jesus as they waited for him to arrive—some saying he was a good man, others calling him a liar.

John 7:14-15 People were amazed when Jesus began to teach because they did not think he was educated.

John 7:16 Jesus told the people in the temple that his teachings were not his, but “his that sent me”.

John 7:17 He instructed the people to gain a testimony of his teachings by doing them.

Elder John K. Carmack of the Seventy said: *“Jesus explained, ‘If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself’ (John 7:17). In other words, as you try it you can know it is true. This requires the faith to try, but it yields spiritual evidence. To the disciple who tries the experiment will come conviction, knowledge, and light”* (Ensign, Nov. 1988, 26).

Think about how your testimony of a gospel principle was strengthened as you lived it.

The opposite of the promise in John 7:17 is also true: if we do not live the principles of the gospel, our testimonies will weaken.

As Jesus taught, the people continued to be divided in their opinion of him.

John 7:31, 37-41 Some of the reasons people believed he was the Christ included his power to work miracles and their belief that he spoke as a prophet.

John 7:27, 41-42, 52 One of the reasons people did not believe he was the Christ was a question about his connection to Galilee.

John 7:28-29; 8:14, 19, 23-29 In one sense the people knew where Jesus was from because they knew his family and his hometown. But in another sense they did not know where he was from because they did not understand that Heavenly Father sent him.

In one of the ceremonies conducted during the Feast of Tabernacles, a priest put water from the pool of Siloam on the altar. This offering was made to request rain and the success of the next year's crops. As Jesus taught in the temple on the last day of the feast, he invited the people to partake of 'living water' (John 7:37-38).

John 4:5-15 records another setting in which Jesus mentioned living water—as he conversed with the Samaritan woman at the well. "Living water" is a fountain of life enjoyed by becoming a true disciple and making the teachings of Christ an integral part of our lives.

A woman taken in adultery was brought to Jesus.

John 8:4-6 The scribes and Pharisees brought an adulterous woman to Jesus. They wanted to trap Jesus into condemning the woman to death or contradicting the law of Moses.

John 8:7 Jesus' counsel to the scribes and Pharisees questioned their right to judge anyone else.

John 8:9 tells us why they didn't stone the woman.

John 8:10-11 While Jesus did not approve of the woman's sin, he did not condemn her for it. Think about what we learn from the Savior's example about how we should respond to people who have sinned seriously as you consider these words from an apostle:

Elder Marvin J. Ashton explained: *"The scribes and Pharisees brought before the Savior a woman taken in adultery. Their purpose was not to show love for either the woman or the Savior, but to embarrass and trick Jesus. ... Jesus did not condone adultery; there is no doubt about His attitude toward proper moral conduct. [But] He chose to teach with love—to show the scribes and Pharisees the need of serving the individual for her best good and to show the destructive forces of trickery and embarrassment"* (Ensign, May 1981, 24).

Jesus declared, "I am the light of the world."

During the Feast of Tabernacles, the temple in Jerusalem was illuminated by the flames from four enormous candelabra. These flames could be seen throughout the city. (See Bible Dictionary, "Feasts," 673.) This provided an appropriate setting for Jesus to announce, "I am the light of the world" (See John 8:12).

John 8:12; Alma 38:9; 3 Nephi 15:9; and D&C 88:6-13 help us understand what it means when Jesus says he is the light of the world.

Matt. 5:14; 3 Nephi 18:24 teach that as people strive to be like Jesus, they too become the light of the world, reflecting his light.

Matt. 5:16; Matt. 28:18-20; Philippians 2:14-15 show us how we can help others see the light that Christ offers.

John 8:29 Jesus told the people in the temple that he always did the things that pleased his Father.

How can we become more committed to doing things that please Heavenly Father?

John 8:30 As Jesus testified of his Father in Heaven, “many believed on him”.

John 8:31-32 Jesus promised these people that if they would continue to follow him they could be free.

John 8:33-34 He taught that the truth frees us from the consequences of sin.

Alma 12:11; Alma 34:35 teach that committing sin places us in bondage to Satan.

John 14:6 Jesus later called himself “the truth”. This affects our understanding of the promise in John 8:32 as we realize that knowing the Savior makes us free.

John 8:39-40 Jesus told the unbelieving Jews that they were not children of Abraham because even though they were literal descendants of Abraham, they did not do righteous works as Abraham did.

John 8:41-44 Jesus told them they were not children of God because he said that they did the works of Satan—and they were therefore the children of the devil. Obviously, we need to demonstrate by our actions that we are Heavenly Father’s children.

John 8:51-53, 56-57 teaches that the Jews were upset by the Lord’s comments about Abraham. They did not realize that Jesus was referring to his ability to overcome spiritual death [verse 51] and to his premortal life [verses 56-57].

John 8:58 Jesus’ statement, “Before Abraham was, I am” helps us understand that he was a God before coming to earth. (See footnote 58*b*; see also Exodus 3:13-14. Jesus is Jehovah, the Great “I Am,” the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.) It is important to know that Jesus was Jehovah before his mortal life to recognize his mission as lawgiver and Savior for this earth.

Conclusion

Jesus Christ is our Savior and only he can free us from the bondage of sin. We must remember to follow Christ, “the light of the world,” so he may guide us to spiritual safety.

“I Was Blind, Now I See”

Lesson 16 - John 9-10

Introduction

Think of the many physical infirmities that Jesus healed during his mortal ministry. They include lameness, palsy, and blindness. Part of this lesson is about Jesus healing a blind man—a miracle he performed often. Healing the blind was a significant miracle in the Savior’s ministry that had inherent symbolism—because the Savior’s power helps us overcome spiritual blindness and “see” or understand spiritual truths. The scriptures studied in this lesson focus on seeing and hearing the Savior and on our responsibility to help others do the same so that we all might have a greater understanding and appreciation of Jesus Christ as the Light of the World and the Good Shepherd.

Jesus gave sight to a man who was born blind.

Before healing the man who was born blind, Jesus proclaimed, “I am the light of the world” (John 9:5).

John 9:6-7, 35-38 records that Jesus brought both physical and spiritual light to the blind man.

John 9:10-11, 15, 17, 24-25, 27, 30-33 show that the man who had been blind testified several times that Jesus had healed him. From this man’s example, we are reminded that we have a responsibility to share our testimonies. The man courageously testified to many people, even those who rejected his testimony and threatened him. We should not do less.

John 9:11, 17, 33, and 38 show us how this man’s testimony grew as he continued to share it. His testimony grew from seeing Jesus as a man, to seeing him as a prophet, a man of God, and finally one to be worshipped. Here we see how a testimony can grow as we share it.

John 9:16 records the varied reactions of the Pharisees when they heard about the miracle. Why might they refuse to acknowledge that Jesus had performed this miracle by the power of God?—perhaps because of pride, anger about Jesus healing on the Sabbath, or fear that they would lose power or popularity.

John 9:16, 18-20, 24, 28-29, 34 show that the Pharisees tried to discredit Jesus. Of course, today we see that some people deny the power of God in our day.

John 9:18-23 records the response of the parents of the man who had been blind when the Pharisees asked them about the miracle.

John 9:22 the parents responded with “ask him” rather than suffer the wrath of the Pharisees.

Consider how we are sometimes like this man’s parents. Could we be more valiant in our testimonies?

John 9:34 records that the Pharisees punished the man when he continued to testify that Jesus had healed him by casting him out. Being *cast out* meant being excommunicated.

John 9:35-37 When Jesus heard that the man had been cast out because of his testimony; he blessed him for remaining faithful during adversity.

John 9:39-41 In some way the Pharisees could see, and in other ways they were blind. They knew the law very well, but they were blind to its true purpose. They refused to see that Jesus came in fulfillment of the law. Think about the difference between seeing with our eyes and “seeing” or understanding spiritually. Some causes of spiritual blindness might include unresolved sins, pride, selfishness, and worldliness. We learn from this account that overcoming spiritual blindness requires humility and a desire to be righteous.

Jesus taught that he was the Good Shepherd.

John 10:1-15, 25-28. In these verses, Jesus described how a shepherd would protect and care for his sheep. In Jesus’ time, sheep were led into an enclosure called a sheepfold for the night. One of the shepherds would guard the door while the others went home to rest. If a wild animal got into the sheepfold, the shepherd would give his life if necessary to protect the sheep. In the morning, each shepherd would return and call his sheep. They would recognize his voice and follow him to pasture.

John 10:4, 27 In Jesus’ discussion of the shepherd and his sheep, the sheep represent his disciples.

John 10:11 The shepherd is Jesus Christ. Some qualities of a good shepherd as exemplified by Christ include:

- **John 10:3-4, 14** He knows his sheep, calls them by name, and leads them.
- **John 10:7,9** He is the door of the sheep, allowing them to enter the fold to be saved and find pasture.
- **John 10:10** He gives the sheep “life ... more abundantly”.
- **John 10:11, 15** He gives his life for the sheep.

John 10:11-14 contrasts the difference between a shepherd and a hireling. Jesus is obviously the perfect example of a shepherd. Refer to the previous list of qualities of a good shepherd and consider how Jesus exemplifies each of these qualities. See **2 Nephi 9:41-42** as you ponder how Jesus is the door of the sheep. As you consider Jesus’ willingness to give his life for us, see **John 10:17-18**.

John 10:3-4 Sheep recognize their shepherd by his voice. Consider how we hear the Lord’s voice while you review these scriptures:

- **D&C 1:37-38** He speaks with his own voice and through the voices of his servants the prophets.
- **D&C 18:33-36** He speaks to us by his voice and through his Spirit
- **D&C 97:1** He speaks with his voice and the voice of his spirit

We are protected when we know and follow the voice of the Good Shepherd.

John 10:1 The thieves and robbers who try to enter the sheepfold are people who try to harm the Lord’s followers or lead them astray.

John 10:10 We can discern between true shepherds and those who try to lead us astray by their motives and their fruits; by whether they give life more abundantly, or if they take from us that which we have.

John 10:9-10, 28 The sheep are rewarded with blessings of salvation, abundance, life, and eternal life for following the Good Shepherd. Think about how you have been personally blessed for following the Savior.

“Other sheep I have” (John 10:16)

To find out to whom Jesus referred in John 10:16, see 3 Nephi 15:21-24. These “other sheep” heard the Savior’s voice through their own prophets and, after his resurrection; they heard his voice in person. This verse could help someone who is investigating the Church to have a better understanding of the Book of Mormon as Elder Howard W. Hunter taught: *“Those who are familiar with the life and teachings of the Master from their knowledge of the books of the Bible will be interested to know there is also a record of his appearance to the people of the Western Hemisphere—the other sheep to whom he made reference. It is titled the Book of Mormon after the prophet who compiled and abridged the records of the peoples of the American continents. The Book of Mormon is another witness for Christ and records his teachings to the other flock in the New World”* (Ensign, May 1983, 16).

Conclusion

Jesus is the Light of the World and the Good Shepherd. In following the Savior, we should remember our responsibilities as shepherds, considering how we too are shepherds for the Lord’s sheep and what we can do to help others hear and follow the voice of the Good Shepherd.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: *“Anyone serving in any capacity in the Church in which he [or she] is responsible for the spiritual or temporal well-being of any of the Lord’s children is a shepherd to those sheep. The Lord holds his shepherds accountable for the safety (salvation) of his sheep”* (Mormon Doctrine, 2nd ed. [1966], 710).

“What Shall I Do That I May Inherit Eternal Life?”

Lesson 17 – Mark 10:17-30; 12:41-44; Luke 12:13-21; 14; 16

Introduction

A simple trap can be used to catch a monkey when a container is secured to the ground, and a treat (such as nuts or fruit) is placed inside. The hole in the container is large enough for a monkey's empty hand to enter easily but too small for the monkey's hand and the treat to come out together. A monkey sees the treat and reaches in to get it. Once the monkey grabs the treat, it will allow itself to be caught rather than let go of the treat. It will not sacrifice this prize for a greater one—its freedom, or even, perhaps, its life.

Sometimes people make mistakes similar to the monkey's. When they obtain something appealing, they may be unwilling to let it go even if keeping it might cause them to lose something better. This lesson is about some things we may have to sacrifice in order to receive the greatest blessing: eternal life with our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. We must be willing to sacrifice the things of this world to obtain a place in the kingdom of heaven.

Trusting in riches can keep a person out of the kingdom of God.

Mark 10:17-21 tells us what Jesus said to the rich young man who asked how to receive eternal life.

Mark 10:22 The instructions saddened the young man since the Lord asked him to give up all his possessions. President Joseph F. Smith said: *“The difficulty with the young man [was that] he had great possessions, and he preferred to rely upon his wealth rather than forsake all and follow Christ. ... No man can obtain the gift of eternal life unless he is willing to sacrifice all earthly things in order to obtain it”* (Gospel Doctrine, 5th ed. [1939], 261).

Mark 10:23-25 Jesus taught about the relationship between having riches and entering the kingdom of God, teaching that it is extremely hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Note that there is a difference between possessing riches and trusting in them. It is our challenge to maintain a proper attitude toward earthly possessions as taught in Mosiah 4:19, 21.

President Smith also taught: *“God is not a respecter of persons. The rich man may enter into the kingdom of heaven as freely as the poor, if he will bring his heart and affections into subjection to the law of God and to the principle of truth; if he will place his affections upon God, his heart upon the truth, and his soul upon the accomplishment of God's purposes, and not fix his affections and his hopes upon the things of the world”* (Gospel Doctrine, 260-61).

Mark 12:41-44 Contrast the rich young man with the poor widow in these verses. The widow was willing to do that which the rich young man was not willing to do. She was willing to give all she had for the kingdom of God. Consider how we can develop an attitude like the poor widow's.

Seek heavenly, rather than earthly, treasures.

Luke 12:13-15 Jesus told the man who was concerned about his inheritance that material abundance is not a worthy measure of a man's life. He taught of the evil of covetousness. Covetousness is a strong desire for wealth or for another person's possessions. In our society, it is easy to list things people covet today, and as we do so, we should consider the danger of coveting.

Looking at Luke 12:15, since we live in a world that often places great value on material possessions, think about how we can remember that our worth as individuals is not determined by how much we own. Consider the blessings that are more important than material possessions, and as you do so, review Luke 12:31-34 and D&C 6:7 for some examples of worthy blessings.

Luke 12:16-21 The man in the parable of the rich fool had been blessed with earthly riches.

In verses 18-21, we see that his actions demonstrated that his heart was set on his riches.

In reviewing Mosiah 4:26 and D&C 52:40, we see what he might have done with his abundance if he had been seeking heavenly, rather than earthly, treasures. Many people set their hearts on worldly wealth even though they know it is only temporary, so we need to determine whether we are too concerned with material possessions, or if we have our priorities in line with gospel teachings.

Followers of Christ must be willing to forsake all to be true disciples.

Interpreting the parable of the great supper, Elder James E. Talmage taught that the invited guests represented the covenant people, or house of Israel. When the servant (Jesus) asked them to come to the feast (accept the gospel), they made excuses and refused to come (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 452).

Luke 14:18-21 When the Israelites made excuses and didn't come to the feast, the Lord invited "the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind"—who did accept the invitation to come to the feast.

The parable of the great supper may apply to us if we make excuses for not feasting at the Lord's table—for example, not reading the scriptures or going to the temple. Individually, we need to demonstrate our acceptance of the Lord's invitation to the feast by making righteous use of our time and abilities.

Luke 14:26-33 Jesus taught that his disciples must be willing to sacrifice anything that he asks of them. Early disciples were asked to sacrifice their trades and professions, their traditions, their possessions, their friends, and even their families on occasion. Those same things are asked of some disciples today. Consider what the Lord has asked you to sacrifice and ponder how you have been blessed for making those sacrifices.

Seek spiritual wealth with enthusiasm and energy.

Concerning the parable of the unjust steward, Elder James E. Talmage explained that the Lord used this parable "*to show the contrast between the care, thoughtfulness, and devotion of men engaged in the money-making affairs of earth, and the half hearted ways of many who are professedly striving after spiritual riches.*" The Lord was not suggesting

that we should emulate the evil practices of the unjust servant, but that we should seek spiritual wealth with the same eagerness and effort that the servant displayed in seeking material wealth.

Elder Talmage continued, *“Worldly-minded men do not neglect provision for their future years, and often are sinfully eager to amass plenty; while the ‘children of light,’ or those who believe spiritual wealth to be above all earthly possessions, are less energetic, prudent, or wise”* (Jesus the Christ, 463).

Compare the amount of time, thought, and energy you devote to accumulating money and possessions with the amount of time, thought, and energy you devote to seeking spiritual treasures. Then ask yourself—How can I become more dedicated and enthusiastic in seeking spiritual treasures?

True charity

Some principles we learn from Luke 14:12-14 about how to serve may include:

- We should not serve with the goal of getting something in return
- We should not limit our service to those who will repay or even thank us

True charity helps us grow closer to the Lord

Conclusion

To receive eternal life, we must be willing to put away the things of the world and serve the Lord with all our heart, might, mind, and strength. Be grateful for your earthly blessings but always strive to view them in the proper perspective.

“He Was Lost, and Is Found”

Lesson 18 – Luke 15 and 17

Introduction

Think about a time when you lost something important to you or when a family member became lost. How did you feel when the object or person was lost? How did you feel when the object or person was found? Jesus often taught spiritual lessons by relating them to common experiences of the people. This lesson discusses some parables that teach the importance of searching for and finding those who are lost. It can also help us understand the joy that comes when we repent and when we help others repent.

The Savior taught the worth of souls.

Luke 15:1-10 Jesus presented the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the piece of silver after the Pharisees and scribes murmured, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them” (Luke 15:2).

Luke 15:4 In the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd left ninety-nine sheep to find one that was lost.

Luke 15:8 In the parable of the piece of silver, the woman sought diligently for one lost coin.

D&C 18:10-13 As taught in these latter-day scriptures, we learn from the actions of the shepherd and the woman that the worth of souls is great; that all men are valuable in the sight of the Lord, and that He rejoices when we repent of our sins.

Luke 15:4-5, 8; Alma 31:34-35 teach us our responsibility toward those who are lost.

President Gordon B. Hinckley spoke of those who are lost, saying: *“Some of our own ... cry out in pain and suffering and loneliness and fear. Ours is a great and solemn duty to reach out and help them, to lift them, to feed them if they are hungry, to nurture their spirits if they thirst for truth and righteousness. ... “... There are those who were once warm in the faith, but whose faith has grown cold. Many of them wish to come back but do not know quite how to do it. They need friendly hands reaching out to them. With a little effort, many of them can be brought back to feast again at the table of the Lord. “My brethren and sisters, I would hope, I would pray that each of us ... would resolve to seek those who need help, who are in desperate and difficult circumstances, and lift them in the spirit of love into the embrace of the Church, where strong hands and loving hearts will warm them, comfort them, sustain them, and put them on the way of happy and productive lives” (Ensign, Nov. 1996, 86).*

Luke 15:5-7, 9-10; D&C 18:15-16 all give us guidance on how we should respond at the return of a person who has been lost.

Jesus taught that Heavenly Father rejoices in forgiving the repentant.

Luke 15:11-32 records the parable of the prodigal son.

Luke 15:13 In the parable of the prodigal son, the younger son took his inheritance and wasted it. Note that *prodigal* means wasteful. With minor effort, we can think of some ways that people today make errors similar to those of the prodigal son.

Luke 15:14-16 records what happened to the prodigal son after he had wasted all his inheritance. In our day, we can find situations that are quite similar to that of the prodigal son.

Luke 15:16 records that when the prodigal son was in want, “no man” in the far country cared for him. We learn from this that we had best be prepared to care for ourselves if we want to leave home and family to indulge our selfish desires for worldly pleasures.

Luke 15:17 teaches that the son thought of his father when he saw that no one in the far country cared for him.

Luke 15:18-19 allows us to see that the son was humbled and he had a repentant attitude when he thought of returning to his father.

Luke 15:20 The father, when he saw his son returning, was overjoyed and expressed great love to his son.

Luke 15:21-24 shows that his father responded to his son’s confession with joy and forgiveness.

Luke 15:7; Mosiah 26:30; D&C 58:42 here we see how the father’s response is like the Lord’s response when we repent.

Referring to the parable of the prodigal son, President Gordon B. Hinckley said: *“I ask you to read that story. Every parent ought to read it again and again. It is large enough to encompass every household, and enough larger than that to encompass all mankind, for are we not all prodigal sons and daughters who need to repent and partake of the forgiving mercy of our Heavenly Father and then follow His example?”* (“Of You It Is Required to Forgive,” *Ensign*, June 1991, 5).

Luke 15:25-30 shows us that the elder son was angry with the way his father received the younger son.

Luke 15:31-32 records the father’s response to the elder son’s complaint. Consider why it is sometimes difficult to welcome back a “prodigal son” who has repented and then consider what we can learn from this man’s response to his returning son.

A man whom Jesus had healed of leprosy returned to thank him.

Luke 17:11-19 provides us with the parable of the ten lepers.

Luke 17:11-14 As the Savior went to Jerusalem, he healed ten lepers. Of those ten lepers, only one returned to express gratitude.

Some of us may be like the nine ungrateful lepers, not always expressing our gratitude for the blessings we receive. Yet the scriptures teach us that it is important that we express gratitude to the Lord.

Luke 17:14, 19 Although all ten lepers were cleansed, only the man who returned was made whole. There is obviously a difference between being healed and being made whole. Bishop Merrill J. Bateman taught: *“In becoming a whole person, the grateful leper was healed inside as well as on the outside. That day nine lepers were healed skin deep, but only one had the faith to be made whole”* (*Ensign*, May 1995, 14).

The parable of the unprofitable servant

Luke 17:5-10 records the parable of the unprofitable servant. Jesus presented this parable after the Apostles requested of him, “Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5). We learn from this parable that we can increase our faith by diligently serving the Lord.

Mosiah 2:20-25 Think about why we are unprofitable servants even when we do everything the Lord commands us to do and what these verses reveal about the Lord’s love for us.

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard

Matthew 20:1-16 records the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. In this parable, those who worked one hour received the same pay as those who worked the entire day. We should not be concerned about who receives the most or who does the most in the service of the Lord. The perfect Judge of all, who knows our hearts, will judge us with mercy and grant us “whatsoever is right” (Matt. 20:4, 7).

Conclusion

We feel great joy when we repent and return to the Lord and when we help others return. We should appreciate Jesus’ parables and other teachings that show God’s love for his children and his desire that we love one another.

“Thy Faith Hath Saved Thee”

Lesson 19 – Luke 18:1-8, 35-43; 19:1-10; John 11

Before Elder Hugh B. Brown left on a mission, his mother told him: *“Hugh, you remember when you were a little boy and you would have a bad dream or wake up in the night frightened? You would call from your room, ‘Mother, are you there?’ and I would answer and try to comfort you and remove your fears. Now as you go on a mission and out into the world, there will be times when you will be frightened, when you feel weak, inadequate, alone, and have problems. I want you to know that you can call to your Heavenly Father as you used to call to me and say, ‘Father, are you there? I need your help.’ Do this with the knowledge that He is there and that He will be ready to help you if you will do your part and live worthy of your blessings. I want to reassure you that He is there and will answer your prayers and needs for your best good”* (told by Marvin J. Ashton, “Know He Is There,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1994, 50).

In this lesson we will study scriptural accounts that can help us develop greater faith that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ know and love each of us.

Jesus presented the parable of the unjust judge and the widow.

Jesus presented this parable to a group of Pharisees.

Luke 18:1 According to this verse, Jesus gave the parable of the unjust judge and the widow to teach men that they should always pray and be tireless about prayer.

Elder James E. Talmage taught, *“Jesus did not indicate that as the wicked judge finally yielded to supplication so would God do; but He pointed out that if even such a being as this judge, who ‘feared not God, neither regarded man,’ would at last hear and grant the widow’s plea, no one should doubt that God, the Just and Merciful, will hear and answer”* (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 436).

Luke 18:7; Alma 34:27 To pray always indicates that we need to pray throughout the day—at any time we need to communicate with Heavenly Father. And when we are not in prayer, we can have a prayer in our hearts throughout the day.

Luke 18:7-8; 2 Nephi 32:9, D&C 90:24 Blessings that can come to us when we pray always include protection and justice, the Lord’s support as we act in his service, and that all things shall work together for our good.

Persevering in prayer is an act of faith. Sometimes, when we have persevered in prayer and feel that we have not received an answer, we should heed the counsel of **Elder Richard G. Scott**, who said: *“It is a mistake to assume that every prayer we offer will be answered immediately. Some prayers require considerable effort on our part. ... “When we explain a problem and a proposed solution [to our Heavenly Father], sometimes He answers yes, sometimes no. Often He withholds an answer, not for lack of concern, but because He loves us—perfectly. He wants us to apply truths He has given us. For us to grow, we need to trust our ability to make correct decisions. We need to do what we feel is right. In time, He will answer. He will not fail us”* (*Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 30-31).

Think about the principles and lessons you have learned as you have persevered in prayer.

A blind man demonstrated his faith and was healed by Jesus.

Luke 18:38-42 The blind man near Jericho showed that he had faith in the Lord by clinging to him for mercy. As you consider his faith, think about how you have been blessed as you have exercised faith in Jesus Christ.

Luke 18:43 Records how this man showed gratitude when he received his sight. Ask yourself, "How can I show my gratitude to the Lord".

Jesus was received in Zacchaeus's home.

Luke 19:2 Zacchaeus was chief among the publicans and was a rich man, but publicans were Jews who worked as tax collectors for the Roman government, and therefore, the Jews generally disliked the publicans and considered them to be traitors and sinners.

Luke 19:3-4 Zacchaeus showed his great desire to see Jesus by climbing a tree.

Luke 19:5 Jesus told Zacchaeus to get down and take him to his house.

Luke 19:6 Zacchaeus responded with joy to Jesus' words. Considering his example, think about what you can do to receive the Savior joyfully into your home.

According to verse 7, people reacted unfavorably when Jesus went to stay with Zacchaeus because of their prejudice toward publicans. Jesus' response to Zacchaeus differed from the response of the others. Many people shunned Zacchaeus because of his profession as a publican. Sometimes we may make similar judgments against others, excluding them or thinking that we are better than they are.

Elder Joe J. Christensen said: *"There are those who wake up every morning dreading to go to school, or even to a Church activity, because they worry about how they will be treated. You have the power to change their lives for the better. ... The Lord is counting on you to be a builder and give them a lift. Think less of yourself and more about the power you have to assist others, even those within your own family"* (Ensign, Nov. 1996, 39).

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

John 11:1-5 Soon after Jesus went to Zacchaeus's home, he received a message from his friends Mary and Martha that their brother Lazarus, who was also Jesus' dear friend, was sick. Two days later, Jesus directed his disciples to go with him to Bethany, the city in Judea where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived. When Jesus returned to Bethany, Lazarus had been dead for four days.

John 11:20-27 Martha, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went out to meet him and expressed her testimony of the Savior's divine mission.

John 11:33-35 Jesus groaned and wept when he saw Mary and many others weeping.

Despite her strong testimony, Martha's faith seemed weak when Jesus asked that the stone be removed from Lazarus's tomb, so the Savior counseled her to believe.

John 11:41-42 Jesus' prayer before he raised Lazarus teaches us about his relationship with his Father.

John 11:43-44 records that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus had already raised two people from the dead (Mark 5:22-24; Mark 5:35-43 and Luke 7:11-17). Raising Lazarus from the dead was different from the two previous instances because the daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow of Nain were raised from the dead soon after their body and spirit had separated. They had not been placed in tombs. Lazarus had been dead for four days, and his body was already in a sepulchre.

The miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead was a witness of the Savior's divine mission.

John 11:45-46 This miracle had differing effects on the people who witnessed it.

Conclusion

The principles taught in the accounts discussed today can strengthen our faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

As Elder Thomas S. Monson said: "The passage of time has not altered the capacity of the Redeemer to change men's lives. As he said to the dead Lazarus, so he says to you and me: '... come forth.' (John 11:43) Come forth from the despair of doubt. Come forth from the sorrow of sin. Come forth from the death of disbelief. Come forth to a newness of life. Come forth" (*Ensign*, May 1974, 50). Look for ways in which you can strengthen your faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

“Woe unto You, ... Hypocrites”

Lesson 20 – Matthew 21-23; John 12:1-8

If I displayed two cups, only allowing you to see the outside of the cups, and then asked which one you would like to drink from, either one would appear acceptable. But if I then let you see the inside of the cups and one was clean while the other was dirty, your choice would obviously be the one that is clean inside as well as on the outside. Jesus compared the Pharisees to a cup that is clean outside but dirty inside (Matt. 23:25-26). The Pharisees paid a great deal of attention to outward ordinances and actions that would make them appear righteous, but they were not as concerned with actually being righteous in their hearts. For this, Jesus referred to them as hypocrites. This lesson will discuss the Savior’s condemnation of hypocrites—people who try to appear righteous but who do not try to live righteously.

As we review the following scripture passages, consider carefully what they teach about avoiding hypocrisy. And please remember that our focus must be on identifying and correcting hypocrisy in our own lives, rather than on identifying it in others.

Mary anointed Jesus’ feet.

Five days before his Crucifixion, Jesus spent an evening with his friends at Bethany. There, Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, anointed the Savior’s feet with spikenard, a costly ointment (John 12:1-3). **Elder James E. Talmage** explained why she did this: *“To anoint the head of a guest with ordinary oil was to do him honor; to anoint his feet also was to show unusual and signal regard; but the anointing of head and feet with spikenard, and in such abundance, was an act of reverential homage rarely rendered even to kings. Mary’s act was an expression of adoration; it was the fragrant outwelling of a heart overflowing with worship and affection”* (Jesus the Christ, 3rd ed. [1916], 512).

Mary anointed the Lord’s feet to show her love for him. The question we need to consider is “How do I show my love for the Lord?”

John 12:4-5 records Judas’ criticism of Mary’s actions. While he tried to indicate concern for the poor by stating that the ointment could have been sold and the proceeds used for relief of the needy, Judas was a hypocrite.

John 12:6 According to this scripture, Judas was a thief, not a concerned defender of the poor.

Jesus made a triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

When Jesus returned to Jerusalem for the Passover, many people came to see him because they heard that he had raised Lazarus from the dead (John 12:17-18). As Jesus approached the city, he was greeted by a great multitude of people who spread their garments in his path and hailed him with palm branches, an honor usually reserved for kings and conquerors. This fulfilled a prophecy by Zechariah (Zech. 9:9) and was a further witness that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Matt. 21:9, 11; Luke 19:38 The people who hailed Jesus with palm branches recognized him as a prophet and king, but others misunderstood his mission or rejected him. People misunderstand or reject the Savior today. Consider how you can more fully accept and welcome him into your life.

Jesus gave the parable of the two sons and the parable of the householder.

Matt. 21:28-30 In the parable of the two sons, the first son proved to be more obedient than the second son.

Matt. 21:31-32 shows Jesus' application of this parable to his listeners. (See also JST Matt. 21:32 in footnote 32*d*.) The publicans and harlots were like the first son because initially they rejected the commandments of God, but when John preached to them, they accepted Christ and repented of their sins. The chief priests and elders were like the second son because they claimed to follow God, but they rejected John's teachings and rejected Jesus even after they saw him in person. The second son was a hypocrite.

Think about the promises we have made to the Lord such as those we make at baptism, when taking the sacrament, and when receiving the priesthood. In that context, think about how we might sometimes be like the second son.

Matt. 21:33-41 In the parable of the householder, Father in Heaven is represented by the householder, or lord of the vineyard; the husbandmen represent the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day; the servants are representative of the prophets; and the son killed by the husbandmen is obviously Jesus Christ.

Matt. 21:41 The Jewish religious leaders were like the husbandmen who betrayed the trust of the lord of the vineyard and killed his servants and his son.

Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:10-12 Jesus Christ was "the stone which the builders rejected". He prophesied that the builders would be destroyed because of their hypocritical actions.

Matt. 21:45-46 records that the chief priests and Pharisees responded with anger when they realized that Jesus was speaking about them in these parables, but they also feared the multitudes, so they did not lay hands on the Savior. Obviously, to apply this lesson, we must overcome any indignation we may feel when we are called to repent.

The scribes and Pharisees tried to trap Jesus.

The following passages, Matt. 22:15-46, record three times when the Pharisees and Sadducees tried to trap Jesus into saying something that would allow them to discredit and condemn him.

Matt. 22:15-17 describes the Pharisees' first try to trap Jesus. If Jesus said yes to the question, they could accuse him of supporting the hated Roman government. If he said no, they could accuse him of rebellion against the government.

Matt. 22:18 Jesus perceived the wickedness of his questioners. The Lord knows our hearts and thoughts. We cannot hide anything from him.

Matt. 22:19-21 Jesus answered the question with counsel to guide us in giving allegiance to God and to earthly governments. (See also the 12th Article of Faith.)

Matt. 22:23-28 records how the Sadducees tried to trap Jesus with a hypocritical question. They pretended to be concerned about marriage in the resurrection, but they did not believe in resurrection. **Matt. 22:29-30** gives Jesus' answer. Doctrine and Covenants 132:15-16 clarifies Jesus' teaching. Those who do not make and keep the covenants of temple marriage will be single in heaven. For those who do make and keep these covenants, marriage will last for eternity.

Matt. 22:34-40 records the third attempt to trap Jesus and his answer. Elder Howard W. Hunter said: *“He loves the Lord with all his heart who ... is ready to give up, do, or suffer anything in order to please and glorify him. He loves God with all his soul ... who is ready to give up life for his sake and to be deprived of the comforts of the world to glorify him. He loves God with all his strength who exerts all the powers of his body and soul in the service of God. He loves God with all his mind who applies himself only to know God and his will, who sees God in all things and acknowledges him in all ways”* (Improvement Era, June 1965, 512).

Jesus condemned the sin of hypocrisy.

Matt. 23:5, 14, 23-28 The scribes and Pharisees paid tithing, gave to the poor, attended worship services, and went regularly to the temple, but the Lord condemned them. They did these things not out of faith, but out of a desire to be seen as righteous by others.

Matt. 23:23 The Lord said they had omitted the “weightier matters” of judgment, mercy, and faith. It would be wise for us to assure that we do not omit these “weightier matters” in our own lives.

Consider how we as Church members might sometimes be hypocrites. For example, when we attend Church meetings we may be more concerned with being seen by others than with worshiping God. We may complain about Church assignments where we do not receive much attention for our service. We may sustain our Church leaders and then criticize their decisions.

To avoid hypocrisy, ask yourself: *Am I paying tithing, giving to the poor, attending my meetings, and serving others for my own glory or for the glory of God? In all my actions, do I seek to draw closer to my Father in Heaven and Jesus Christ?*

Conclusion

We need to examine our lives for hypocrisy and seek to eliminate it. A sincere desire to serve and obey Jesus Christ, motivated by love for and faith in him, will bring us closer to him and increase our love and faith.

“What Is the Sign of Thy Coming”
Lesson 21 – Joseph Smith-Matthew; Matthew 24

Introduction

Look out a window and observe the sky. What if the sky is clear and it's hot outside, but I predict that it will snow in a few hours? What if it's cold and rainy outside and it appears that the rain will continue for a while, but I confidently predict that it will be hot and dry outside within five minutes. Think about my prediction. What would you predict about the weather in the next few hours? What helps you make that prediction? The signs of upcoming weather conditions influence the things we do and we often make preparations based on these signs. For example, we may make plans for outdoor activities when it appears that the weather will be pleasant, or we may make special preparations to withstand a severe storm.

Predicting the weather is one situation in which we rely on signs to help us prepare for upcoming events. If we watch the signs, we reduce our chances of being caught unprepared. Similarly, watching for the signs of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ can help us prepare for that great event. This lesson discusses some of the signs that Jesus prophesied would precede his Second Coming. Note that a prediction specifies something that *may* happen, while a prophecy specifies something that *will* happen. A prediction about the weather may turn out to be wrong, but the prophecies about the Second Coming will all be fulfilled.

In spite of the tribulations of the last days, we can look forward with joy to this great event.

Matthew 24 contains the Savior's prophecies about the destruction of Jerusalem and about his Second Coming. Over time, the verses in this chapter have been changed and rearranged, making it sometimes difficult to understand which event a particular verse describes. Fortunately, as part of his inspired translation of the Bible, Joseph Smith clarified the two prophecies and restored additional information. His inspired translation of Matthew 24 is found in Joseph Smith-Matthew in the Pearl of Great Price.

Jesus foretold the impending destruction of Jerusalem.

A few days before Jesus was crucified, some of his disciples accompanied him to the Mount of Olives. The disciples asked two questions of Jesus.

Joseph Smith-Matthew (JS-M) 1:4 contains their questions about the destruction of Jerusalem and the Savior's Second Coming.

JS-M 1:5-20 is the Savior's answer to their first question about the destruction of Jerusalem.

JS-M 1:21-55 is the Savior's answer to their second question about his Second Coming.

JS-M 1:2-3, 12 records Jesus' prophecy about the temple in Jerusalem and the city itself.

JS-M 1:5-10 reveals the signs that the Savior prophesied would precede the destruction of Jerusalem.

JS-M 1:11-15 contains Jesus' counsel to his followers on how to avoid destruction.

Luke 9:62; D&C 133:14-15 tell why it was important that they not return to their homes once they had fled.

Although many Jews did not believe their great city and temple could be destroyed, the Lord's prophecies were fulfilled in A.D. 70. Believing that the Messiah would come and help them in battle, the Jews revolted against the Romans in A.D. 66. Four years later the Romans had destroyed the entire city. Those who listened to the Savior and fled into the mountains were spared. Those who did not heed this counsel were scattered and destroyed.

Jesus described the signs that would precede his Second Coming.

The second question asked by the disciples concerned the Savior's Second Coming and the accompanying destruction of the wicked, which is sometimes called "the end of the world".

JS-M 1:22 describes one sign of the Savior's Second Coming. This prophecy is being fulfilled.

Matt. 7:15-20; D&C 45:57; D&C 46:7-8 tell us how we can avoid being deceived by false prophets.

JS-M 1:23 and JS-M 1:28 mention other signs of the Second Coming. Think about evidence you see that this prophecy is being fulfilled. The Lord taught that we should "be not troubled" by wars and rumors of war.

1 John 4:16-18; D&C 6:34-36; D&C 45:34-35; D&C 59:23 are scriptures which teach us how we can find peace during such troubled times.

Elder M. Russell Ballard gave the following counsel of hope and encouragement:

"Although the prophecies tell us that these things are to take place, more and more people are expressing great alarm at what appears to be an acceleration of worldwide calamity. ... Admittedly we have ample reason to be deeply concerned because we see no immediate answers to the seemingly unsolvable problems confronting the human family. But regardless of this dark picture, which will ultimately get worse, we must never allow ourselves to give up hope! ... " ... The Lord is in control. He knows the end from the beginning. He has given us adequate instruction that, if followed, will see us safely through any crisis. His purposes will be fulfilled, and someday we will understand the eternal reasons for all of these events. Therefore, today we must be careful not to overreact, nor should we be caught up in extreme preparations; but what we must do is keep the commandments of God and never lose hope! ... "But where do we find hope in the midst of such turmoil and catastrophe? Quite simply, our one hope for spiritual safety during these turbulent times is to turn our minds and our hearts to Jesus Christ. ... Armed with the shield of faith, we can overcome many of our daily challenges and overpower our greatest weaknesses and fears, knowing that if we do our best to keep the commandments of God, come what may, we will be all right" (Ensign, Nov. 1992, 31-32).

JS-M 1:27; JS-M 1:31 reveal still other signs of the Second Coming. These prophecies are being fulfilled today as missionary work is increasing, and the gospel is being taught and accepted in more and more places around the world. Each of us has a responsibility to help fulfill these prophecies.

JS-M 1:29-30 teaches about the signs of the natural disasters that will precede the Second Coming.

JS-M 1:12 The Lord told his followers in Jerusalem to “stand in the holy place”, and he has given similar counsel in our day in D&C 87:8 and D&C 101:22.

Regarding holy places in which we should stand and how these places will help protect us during the difficulties of the last days, **President Ezra Taft Benson said**, *“Holy men and holy women stand in holy places, and these holy places include our temples, our chapels, our homes, and the stakes of Zion, which are, as the Lord declares, ‘for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth’ (D&C 115:6)”* (“Prepare Yourselves for the Great Day of the Lord,” *Brigham Young University 1981 Fireside and Devotional Speeches* [1981], 68).

JS-M 1:37 provides guidance from the Savior to help us not be deceived in the last days before his Second Coming. We must treasure up the Lord’s word to avoid being deceived.

Jesus taught the following passages to help us prepare for his Second Coming:

JS-M 1:38-40 - The parable of the fig tree.

JS-M 1:41-43 - The comparison of the Second Coming to the days of Noah.

JS-M 1:44-46 - The prophecy of two people working in the field and two people grinding at the mill.

JS-M 1:47-48 - The parable of the good man and the thief.

JS-M 1:49-54 - The parable of the lord and his servants.

It is important that we continuously watch and prepare for the Lord’s coming.

What will happen to the righteous when the Savior comes again?

- **JS-M 1:37** The righteous will be gathered with the elect
- **JS-M 1:44-45** The righteous will be taken.
- **JS-M 1:50** The righteous shall be made rulers
- **1 Thes. 4:16-18** The righteous shall meet the Lord in the air and ever be with the Lord
- **D&C 88:96-98** The righteous shall be quickened and caught up to meet the Lord.

Conclusion

The scriptural prophecies about Jesus Christ’s Second Coming will all be fulfilled. By studying the teachings of the Savior and following the counsel of the living prophets, we can prepare ourselves to meet Christ. If we are prepared, the Second Coming will be a wonderful day for us.

“Inherit the Kingdom Prepared for You”

Lesson 22 - Matthew 25

Introduction

This lesson focuses on three parables the Savior taught in response to his Apostles' questions about his Second Coming.

Jesus presented the parable of the ten virgins.

The parable of the ten virgins is based on Jewish wedding customs. In Jesus' time, the bridegroom and his friends would escort the bride from her home to the home of the bridegroom. Along the way, the friends of the bride waited to join them. When they arrived at the bridegroom's home, they all went inside for the wedding. These weddings usually took place in the evening, so those waiting for the bride and bridegroom carried small lamps fueled by oil.

In the parable of the ten virgins, the bridegroom represents The Savior. The virgins represent members of the Church. The wedding represents the Savior's Second Coming. The oil in the lamps represents preparation for the Second Coming.

Matt. 25:3 teaches that five of the virgins did that which was foolish—failing to be properly prepared.

Matt. 25:8-12 shows the consequences of their lack of preparation. Sometimes we make the same error as the foolish virgins.

Matt. 25:4 Five of the virgins did that which was wise—preparing for future need.

Matt. 25:10 shows the consequences of their preparation. We can learn from the actions of the five wise virgins and from **D&C 45:56-57** that we must prepare ourselves for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Keeping in mind that the oil in the parable represents preparation for the Second Coming, we can add “oil” to our “lamps” by observing righteous living practices, such as exercising faith, receiving ordinances, keeping covenants, or giving service.

President Spencer W. Kimball: *“In the parable, oil can be purchased at the market. In our lives the oil of preparedness is accumulated drop by drop in righteous living. Attendance at sacrament meetings adds oil to our lamps, drop by drop over the years. Fasting, family prayer, home teaching, control of bodily appetites, preaching the gospel, studying the scriptures—each act of dedication and obedience is a drop added to our store. Deeds of kindness, payment of offerings and tithes, chaste thoughts and actions, marriage in the covenant for eternity—these, too, contribute importantly to the oil with which we can at midnight refuel our exhausted lamps”* (*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [1972], 256).

For application of this lesson's principles, consider your answers to these questions: What did you do this past week to add oil to your lamp? What are some things you will do this coming week to add oil to your lamp?

Jesus presented the parable of the talents.

In New Testament times, a talent was a sum of money (Bible Dictionary, “Money,” 733-34).

In the parable of the talents, the man traveling to a far country represents the Lord. The servants represent each of us. The talents represent gifts from God.

Matt. 25:16-17 records what the servants who were given five talents and two talents did with the money.

Matt. 25:21, 23 tell us the reward they both received—each being praised and being given greater blessings for their faithful, prudent actions.

This parable teaches this principle about the eternal reward our Heavenly Father will bless us with—that people who seem to have fewer gifts from God will receive every blessing if they use their gifts to the fullest.

Elder James E. Faust said of those who seem to have received fewer talents: *“If their talents are used to build the kingdom of God and serve others, they will fully enjoy the promises of the Savior. The great promise of the Savior is that they ‘shall receive [their] reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come’ (D&C 59:23)” (Ensign, May 1994, 6).*

Matt. 25:24-25 records what the servant who was given one talent did with the money.

Matt. 25:26-30 details his master’s judgment and condemnation for the servant’s unwise stewardship.

Sometimes we fail to develop the talents and gifts God has given us, but we can overcome obstacles to developing these gifts.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton taught that *“it is our right and responsibility to accept our gifts and to share them” (Ensign, Nov. 1987, 20).*

To benefit from this lesson, consider how you can recognize and accept the talents or gifts the Lord has entrusted to you. Then, think about why it is important to share your talents or gifts. Further, consider the blessings have come into your life because you have developed and shared your talents or gifts. Finally, ponder the blessings that have come to you because others have shared their talents or gifts.

D&C 46:11-12 Every person has been given at least one gift from God, but some gifts are easier to recognize than others. Consider some of the gifts that might be difficult to recognize but that can be used to serve others and glorify God....

Elder Marvin J. Ashton said: *“Let me mention a few gifts that are not always evident or noteworthy but that are very important. Among these may be your gifts—gifts not so evident but nevertheless real and valuable. “Let us review some of these less-conspicuous gifts: the gift of asking; the gift of listening; the gift of hearing and using a still, small voice; the gift of being able to weep; the gift of avoiding contention; the gift of being agreeable; the gift of avoiding vain repetition; the gift of seeking that which is righteous; the gift of not passing judgment; the gift of looking to God for guidance; the gift of being a disciple; the gift of caring for others; the gift of being able to ponder; the gift of offering prayer; the gift of bearing a mighty testimony; and the gift of receiving the Holy Ghost” (Ensign, Nov. 1987, 20).*

To help you really actively apply the principles of this lesson, take a pen or pencil and a piece of paper. Write down one or two of your talents or gifts along with at least one specific thing you will do in the next few weeks to use them in the service of others. Remember, as we develop the talents or gifts God has given us, we add oil to our lamps.

Jesus presented the parable of the sheep and the goats.

Matt. 25:31-32 Jesus taught that at his Second Coming he will separate us as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

Matt. 25:33-34 In the parable of the sheep and the goats, the sheep represent faithful followers.

Matt. 25:33, 41 - here, the goats represent those who did not follow the Savior in their actions.

Matt. 25:35-46 This parable teaches that we must prepare for the Second Coming and the day of judgment wherein we will be held accountable for our actions and motivation.

Elder Marion D. Hanks said: *“Jesus taught his followers the parable of the sheep and the goats, representing the judgment to come, in which he clearly identified those who will inherit ‘life eternal’ and those who will ‘go away into everlasting punishment’ (Matt. 25:46). The key difference was that those who should inherit the kingdom with him had developed the habit of helping, had experienced the joy of giving and the satisfaction of serving. They had responded to the needs of the hungry, thirsty, homeless, the naked, the sick, and those in prison. ... “Nothing would seem more clear than the high premium the Savior put upon selfless service to others as an indispensable element of Christian conduct and of salvation. Helping, giving, and sacrificing are, or should be, as natural as growing and breathing” (Ensign, May 1992, 9).*

As we serve others, we add oil to our lamps. We also may help others add oil to their own lamps.

We should remember that we bless others by our service and serving another person blesses us. Consider also how you feel about those you serve and how you feel about those who serve you.

Matt. 25:40 gives us an opportunity to consider what the Savior meant when he said, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me”. (See also Mosiah 2:17).

Conclusion

We should prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. We should develop the gifts God has given us and follow the Savior’s example in devoting our lives to the service of others. We can all do these things, regardless of our circumstances.

“Love One Another, As I Have Loved You”

Lesson 23 – Luke 22:1-38; John 13

Introduction

The hymn “Love One Another,” comes from John 13:34-35. Jesus spoke these words at the Last Supper. This lesson will discuss this commandment and other things Jesus said and did during this meeting with his Apostles. The Savior’s words and actions during the Last Supper showed his love for his Apostles and for us. Jesus wants us to follow his example in loving and serving others.

Jesus instituted the sacrament.

Luke 22:7-30 describes the Passover meal, shared by Jesus and his Apostles the day before Jesus was crucified, is often called the Last Supper.

Luke 22:19-20 When Jesus and his Apostles met to eat the Passover meal, Jesus introduced the ordinance of the sacrament. He told the Apostles the purpose of the sacrament—to be a remembrance of him and his atoning sacrifice.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said: *“Since that upper room experience on the eve of Gethsemane and Golgotha, children of the promise have been under covenant to remember Christ’s sacrifice in this newer, higher, more holy and personal way. ... If remembering is the principal task before us, what might come to our memory when those plain and precious emblems are offered to us?”* (Ensign, Nov. 1995, 67, 68).

Elder Holland answered his own question, including some of the following things as suggestions that we should remember about the Savior (Ensign, Nov. 1995, 68-69):

- His love and strength in the Grand Council of Heaven.
- That he is the Creator of heaven and earth.
- All that he did in his premortal life as Jehovah.
- The simple grandeur of his birth.
- His teachings.
- His miracles and healings.
- That “all things which are good cometh of Christ” (Moroni 7:24).
- The unkind treatment, rejection, and injustice he endured.
- That he descended below all things in order to rise above them.
- That he made his sacrifices and endured his sorrows for each of us.

It is important that we take the sacrament each week and equally important that we prepare ourselves spiritually before partaking of the sacrament to renew our covenants.

Luke 22:24 (see also Matt. 18:1; Luke 9:46) At the Last Supper the Apostles again contended about *“which of them should be accounted the greatest”*. Think about ways in which we sometimes wish to be considered greater than someone else—and how we may overcome these feelings.

Luke 22:25-27; Matt. 20:25-28 record what the Lord taught about true greatness. He himself exemplified this teaching, so we have his example to guide us in our actions.

Taking upon us the name of Christ

The following answers are adapted from a talk given by Elder Dallin H. Oaks in the April 1985 general conference (*Ensign*, May 1985, 80-83) while discussing the following questions:

When do we take upon ourselves the name of Christ?

- When we are baptized into his Church (2 Nephi 31:13; Mosiah 25:23; Moroni 6:3; D&C 18:22-25; D&C 20:37).
- When we renew our baptismal covenants by partaking of the sacrament (Moroni 4:3; Moroni 5:2; D&C 20:77; D&C 20:79).
- When we proclaim our belief in him.
- When we take upon ourselves the authority to act in his name and exercise that authority.
- When we participate in the sacred ordinances of the temple.

What do we promise when we take upon ourselves the name of Christ?

- We signify our willingness to do the work of his kingdom and our determination to serve him to the end (D&C 20:37; Moroni 6:3).
- We promise to follow him with real intent, obeying him and repenting of our sins (2 Nephi 31:13; Mosiah 5:8).

Jesus Christ promises us, when we take upon us his name, that we become his sons and daughters, bearing his name. Those who are called by his name at the last day will be exalted; (see Mosiah 5:7-9; Mosiah 15:12; Alma 5:14; 3 Nephi 27:5-6; D&C 76:55, 58, 62.).

After washing their feet, Jesus commanded the Apostles to love one another.

John 13:4-5 When Jesus and his Apostles had eaten the Last Supper, Jesus washed each of the Apostles' feet. This task was usually performed by a servant when a guest arrived. One reason Jesus did this was to teach his Apostles about humility and service.

John 13:6, 8 Simon Peter objected when Jesus began to wash his feet. He felt it was not right for the Lord to act as a servant.

John 13:8 Jesus responded that this was necessary if Peter wished to have part with him. The same is true for us. Unless we are cleansed by the Savior, we cannot join him in his kingdom.

John 13:12-17 Jesus told the Apostles that they should follow his example of service.

From Jesus' words and actions, we can learn the qualities of good leaders. Then, as we serve in positions of leadership, we can follow his example.

John 13:34-35; John 15:12, 17 During the Last Supper, Jesus repeatedly told his disciples to love one another.

To apply his teachings, think of some specific things you can do to follow Christ's example of love.

Jesus taught, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" and "I am the true vine."

John 14:4-5 shows that Thomas was concerned when Jesus told the Apostles, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know".

John 14:6 Here, Jesus told Thomas: "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" Jesus is the only way by which we can come unto Heavenly Father.

John 14:15 Jesus taught his disciples to show their love for others through service. He told them to show their love for him by keeping his commandments. Our obedience demonstrates our love for the Lord.

John 15:1-8 As he taught his Apostles, Jesus used the symbol of a vine. Christ is symbolized by the vine. As He taught, his Father is the husbandman (gardener); and his disciples are the branches.

As you ponder this symbolism, consider what happens to a leaf or branch that is cut off from the rest of the plant. Your relationship to the Savior is much like the relationship of a leaf or branch to the main body of the plant.

John 15:2 In the Savior's comparison, the gardener takes away the branches of the vine that do not bear fruit. He purges the branches that do bear fruit. *Purgeth* means purifies; see John 15, footnote 2c. Consider what application this might have for you.

John 15:5 Jesus taught, "*He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing*". Consider how you have found this to be true.

John 15:13 According to this verse, giving one's life for another is one of the greatest demonstrations of love. This confirms the Savior's love for us.

Conclusion

Jesus Christ loves us and wants us to love and serve one another. Remember Christ's Atonement and his love for us during the sacrament each week.

“This Is Life Eternal”

Lesson 24 – John 16 - 17

Introduction

This lesson encourages us to be receptive to the influence of the Holy Ghost and to draw nearer to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Jesus promised his Apostles that they would receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

John 16:1-6 In the final hours of his mortal ministry, Jesus taught and strengthened his Apostles. The Apostles needed to be strengthened at this time because they were sorrowful. (See also John 15:18-20)

John 16:7 The Savior told the Apostles that he would send the Comforter (the Holy Ghost) to them.

John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:7-14 all help us understand the mission of the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost:

- Comforts (John 14:26).
- Teaches (John 14:26).
- Brings truths to our remembrance (John 14:26).
- Testifies of the Savior (John 15:26).
- Guides us into all truth (John 16:13).
- Shows us things to come (John 16:13).
- Glorifies the Savior (John 16:14).

John 20:22 The Twelve Apostles experienced manifestations of the Holy Ghost during Jesus' mortal ministry, but they did not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost until after his death and resurrection.

Explaining the difference between a manifestation of the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost, **Elder Dallin H. Oaks** taught: *“Manifestations of the Holy Ghost are given to lead sincere seekers to gospel truths that will persuade them to repentance and baptism. The gift of the Holy Ghost is more comprehensive. ... [It] includes the right to constant companionship, that we may ‘always have his Spirit to be with [us]’ (D&C 20:77).... “A newly baptized member told me what she felt when she received that gift. This was a faithful Christian woman who had spent her life in service to others. She knew and loved the Lord, and she had felt the manifestations of His Spirit. When she received the added light of the restored gospel, she was baptized and the elders placed their hands upon her head and gave her the gift of the Holy Ghost. She recalled, ‘I felt the influence of the Holy Ghost settle upon me with greater intensity than I had ever felt before. He was like an old friend who had guided me in the past but now had come to stay’ ” (Ensign, Nov. 1996, 60).*

Acts 5:32; D&C 6:14; D&C 20:77; D&C 76:116; D&C 121:45-46 After we have received the gift of the Holy Ghost, we can be worthy of the Holy Ghost's constant companionship through obedience, sincerely seeking guidance and inspiration in personal prayer, partaking of the sacrament worthily, remembrance of the Savior, keeping the commandments, loving God, purifying ourselves before God, being full of charity to all men, and thinking virtuous thoughts.

Gal. 5:22-23; D&C 6:15; D&C 6:23; D&C 11:13 teach that we can recognize the influence of the Holy Ghost by its fruits—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness,

goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; the ability to ask for and receive guidance and knowledge; peace of mind; and enlightenment of our minds and joy in our souls.

President Boyd K. Packer taught: *“The Holy Ghost speaks with a voice that you feel more than you hear. It is described as a ‘still small voice.’ And while we speak of ‘listening’ to the whisperings of the Spirit, most often one describes a spiritual prompting by saying, ‘I had a feeling ...’ ... Revelation comes as words we feel more than hear”* (Ensign, Nov. 1994, 60).

In a dream given to President Brigham Young, the **Prophet Joseph Smith** instructed him to teach the Saints that *“the Spirit of the Lord ... will whisper peace and joy to their souls; it will take malice, hatred, strife and all evil from their hearts; and their whole desire will be to do good, bring forth righteousness and build up the kingdom of God”* (Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1846-1847, comp. Elden J. Watson [1971], 529).

Jesus foretold his death and resurrection.

John 16:16-20 After Jesus taught the Apostles about the Holy Ghost, he told them that he would soon die and be resurrected. Then he said, *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace”* (John 16:33).

We can learn from Jesus’ teachings in John 16 (See also Philip. 4:7-9; D&C 59:23.) as we remember what Jesus said to his Apostles, *“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33). The knowledge that Jesus has overcome the world can help us be of good cheer when we are faced with tribulation.

Jesus offered the great intercessory prayer.

John 17 records the prayer that Jesus offered just before his suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross. This prayer is often called the great intercessory prayer because as Jesus prayed, he interceded, or stood between us and Heavenly Father, to plead for our salvation.

John 17:1-2 As Jesus began his prayer, he described his mission on earth as being to give eternal life to his followers. (See also Moses 1:39) He accomplished this mission through his Atonement. In his prayer, the Savior said, *“This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent”* (John 17:3).

1 John 4:7-8; Mosiah 5:10-13; Alma 22:18; D&C 18:33-36; D&C 132:21-24 Knowing Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ is different from merely knowing *about* them. We come to know them, as the scriptures teach by loving, serving them, repenting of our sins, bearing our testimonies, and by receiving the Father and Son and abiding in their law.

John 17:4-8 In the first part of his prayer, Jesus described the things he had done toward fulfilling his mission—glorified the Father, manifested his Father’s name to men, taught the Father’s words, and prayed for his disciples.

Consider carefully how you report your efforts to Heavenly Father and how might it affect your actions if each night you included in your prayers a report of your efforts to serve him during that day.

John 17:6-9, 20 Even though Jesus knew that he was about to suffer intensely, he pray not for himself, but for his followers and those who would believe on him.

John 17:14 We, like Jesus and his Apostles, can live in the world and be “not of the world”? (See also verses John 17:15-16).

Elder M. Russell Ballard said: *“In the Church, we often state the couplet, ‘Be in the world but not of the world.’ As we observe television shows that make profanity, violence, and infidelity commonplace and even glamorous, we often wish we could lock out the world in some way and isolate our families from*

it all. ... “Perhaps we should state the couplet previously mentioned as two separate admonitions. First, ‘Be in the world.’ Be involved; be informed. Try to be understanding and tolerant and to appreciate diversity. Make meaningful contributions to society through service and involvement. Second, ‘Be not of the world.’ Do not follow wrong paths or bend to accommodate or accept what is not right. “We should strive to change the corrupt and immoral tendencies in television and in society by keeping things that offend and debase out of our homes. In spite of all of the wickedness in the world, and in spite of all the opposition to good that we find on every hand, we should not try to take ourselves or our children out of the world. Jesus said, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven,’ or yeast (Matt. 13:33). We are to lift the world and help all to rise above the wickedness that surrounds us. The Savior prayed to the Father: “ ‘I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil’ (John 17:15)” (Ensign, May 1989, 80).

John 17:21-22 speaks of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ as “one”. Speaking of Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, **President Gordon B. Hinckley said:** “They are distinct beings, but they are one in purpose and effort. They are united as one in bringing to pass the grand, divine plan for the salvation and exaltation of the children of God. ... It is that perfect unity between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost that binds these three into the oneness of the divine Godhead” (Ensign, Nov. 1986, 51).

John 17:22-23 It was important for the Apostles to be one so that they might be perfected.

Conclusion

Think about how you feel when you know someone is praying for you. Ponder how you might have felt if you had been with Jesus when he offered the intercessory prayer. The intercessory prayer can help us appreciate the precious gift of eternal life that the Savior offers us. We will be blessed as we strive to follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost and become one with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

“Not My Will, But Thine, Be Done”

Lesson 25 – Matt. 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46

Introduction

Several years before Elder Orson F. Whitney was ordained an Apostle, he received a vision of the Savior in the Garden of Gethsemane. Elder Whitney’s description of his vision:

“I seemed to be in the Garden of Gethsemane, a witness of the Savior’s agony. I saw Him as plainly as ever I have seen anyone. Standing behind a tree in the foreground, I beheld Jesus, with Peter, James and John, as they came through a little ... gate at my right. Leaving the three Apostles there, after telling them to kneel and pray, the Son of God passed over to the other side, where He also knelt and prayed. It was the same prayer with which all Bible readers are familiar: ‘Oh my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.’ “As He prayed the tears streamed down his face, which was toward me. I was so moved at the sight that I also wept, out of pure sympathy. My whole heart went out to him; I loved him with all my soul, and longed to be with him as I longed for nothing else. “Presently He arose and walked to where those Apostles were kneeling—fast asleep! He shook them gently, awoke them, and in a tone of tender reproach, untinged by the least show of anger or impatience, asked them plaintively if they could not watch with him one hour. There He was, with the awful weight of the world’s sin upon his shoulders, with the pangs of every man, woman and child shooting through his sensitive soul—and they could not watch with him one poor hour! “Returning to his place, He offered up the same prayer as before; then went back and again found them sleeping. Again he awoke them, readmonished them, and once more returned and prayed. Three times this occurred” (Through Memory’s Halls [1930], 82).

This lesson and lesson 26 are about the Atonement—Jesus Christ’s voluntary act of taking upon himself death and the sins and infirmities of all mankind. This lesson focuses on the Savior’s experience in the Garden of Gethsemane, while lesson 26 discusses his Crucifixion. It is important to remember that the Atonement included the Savior’s suffering both in the garden and on the cross.

President Ezra Taft Benson taught: *“In Gethsemane and on Calvary, He worked out the infinite and eternal atonement. It was the greatest single act of love in recorded history. Thus He became our Redeemer—redeeming all of us from physical death, and redeeming those of us from spiritual death who will obey the laws and ordinances of the gospel” (The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson [1988], 14).*

The Savior took upon himself our sins and infirmities.

Luke 22:39-40 Jesus asked his Apostles to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Luke 22:40 Note that He asked the Apostles to pray that they might not enter into temptation.

Matt. 26:38, 41 Jesus asked Peter, James, and John to “watch with me” in the Garden of Gethsemane. Here, the word *watch* means to stay awake; (see footnote 38b).

2 Nephi 4:28; Alma 7:22; Alma 32:26-27 The command to watch, or stay awake, is repeated in these scriptures to help us as we strive to live the gospel—that we might not “droop in sin”; that we might awaken to our sense of duty to God and walk blameless before Him; that we might arouse our faculties and experiment on Alma’s words and exercise a particle of faith.

Matt. 26:39, 42, 44 Jesus was willing to submit to the great suffering he knew he would experience in the Garden of Gethsemane because he wanted his Father's will to be done.

We can learn humility from the Savior's prayer in Gethsemane. Consider carefully how you have been blessed as you have submitted to Heavenly Father's will.

Luke 22:43 After Jesus said that he would do Heavenly Father's will, "*there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him*". This teaches us about our Heavenly Father in that He will strengthen us as we humbly do his will.

D&C 19:16-19; Luke 22:44; Mosiah 3:7; Alma 7:11-13 The Savior experienced pain and bleeding at every pore, agony, great anguish, afflictions, and the pains of our infirmities in Gethsemane.

Elder James E. Talmage taught: "*Christ's agony in the garden is unfathomable by the finite mind, both as to intensity and cause. ... He struggled and groaned under a burden such as no other being who has lived on earth might even conceive as possible. It was not physical pain, nor mental anguish alone, that caused him to suffer such torture as to produce an extrusion of blood from every pore; but a spiritual agony of soul such as only God was capable of experiencing. ... In that hour of anguish Christ met and overcame all the horrors that Satan, 'the prince of this world,' could inflict. ... In some manner, actual and terribly real though to man incomprehensible, the Savior took upon Himself the burden of the sins of mankind from Adam to the end of the world*" (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 613).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell said: "*As part of His infinite atonement, Jesus knows 'according to the flesh' all that through which we pass. (Alma 7:11-12). He has borne the sins, griefs, sorrows, and ... pains of every man, woman, and child (see 2 Nephi 9:21)*" (*Ensign*, May 1987, 72).

We need the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Alma 34:9 explains why we need the Atonement of Jesus Christ—"*else all mankind must unavoidably perish*".

- Because of the Fall of Adam and Eve, we are subject to physical death, which is the separation of the body and the spirit (**Moses 6:48**).
- When we sin, we bring spiritual death upon ourselves because we separate ourselves from God. Our sins make us unclean and unable to dwell with God (**1 Nephi 10:21**).
- Because we cannot overcome physical or spiritual death by ourselves, Heavenly Father sent his Only Begotten Son to offer the Atonement (**John 3:16; 2 Nephi 2:5-9**).

Blessings are available to us because of the Savior's atoning sacrifice. We can receive these blessings:

- Because the Savior submitted to death and was resurrected, we will all be resurrected, overcoming physical death (**Mosiah 16:7-8**).
- Because he took upon himself our sins, we can repent of our sins and be forgiven, making us clean and worthy to dwell with God (**Alma 7:13-14; Articles of Faith 3**).
- Because he took upon himself our infirmities, he understands our difficulties and knows how to help us (**Alma 7:11-12**). We receive peace in him as we humbly follow him (**D&C 19:23**).

Elder Marion G. Romney explained that through the Atonement, all people are saved from physical death and the repentant and obedient are also saved from sin:

"It took the atonement of Jesus Christ to reunite the bodies and spirits of men in the resurrection. And

so all the world, believers and non-believers, are indebted to the Redeemer for their certain resurrection, because the resurrection will be as wide as was the fall, which brought death to every man. "There is another phase of the atonement which makes me love the Savior even more, and fills my soul with gratitude beyond expression. It is that in addition to atoning for Adam's transgression, thereby bringing about the resurrection, the Savior by his suffering paid the debt for my personal sins. He paid the debt for your personal sins and for the personal sins of every living soul that ever dwelt upon the earth or that ever will dwell in mortality upon the earth. But this he did conditionally. The benefits of this suffering for our individual transgressions will not come to us unconditionally in the same sense that the resurrection will come regardless of what we do. If we partake of the blessings of the atonement as far as our individual transgressions are concerned, we must obey the law. "... When we commit sin, we are estranged from God and rendered unfit to enter into his presence. No unclean thing can enter into his presence. We cannot of ourselves, no matter how we may try, rid ourselves of the stain which is upon us as a result of our own transgressions. That stain must be washed away by the blood of the Redeemer, and he has set up the way by which that stain may be removed. That way is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel requires us to believe in the Redeemer, accept his atonement, repent of our sins, be baptized by immersion for the remission of our sins, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, and continue faithfully to observe, or do the best we can to observe, the principles of the gospel all the days of our lives" (Conference Report, Oct. 1953, 35-36).

Conclusion

The Atonement of Jesus Christ was for you and me. We should be eternally grateful for his sacrifice on our behalf.

“To This End Was I Born”

Lesson 26 – Matthew 26:47-75; Matthew 27; Mark 14:43-72; Mark 15;
Luke 22:47-71; Luke 23; John 18

Introduction

Turn to the map “Jerusalem in Jesus’ Time” (map 17 in the Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Version of the Bible). This lesson focuses on the Savior’s Crucifixion and the events in the hours that preceded it. These events occurred at places found on the map. Locate the following sites: (1) the Garden of Gethsemane, (2) the house of Caiaphas, (3) the court of the Gentiles, (4) Fortress Antonia (the house of Pilate), and (5) the Hill of Golgotha (Calvary). When you have located the Hill of Golgotha, that is the location of the crucifixion. Imagine a small child looking at a picture of the crucifixion and asking, “*Why did Jesus need to die?*” Ponder what you would say to the child.

Jesus was betrayed, arrested, and accused of blasphemy; Peter denied Jesus three times.

John 18:10 records Peter’s hostile response to the men who came to the Garden of Gethsemane to take Jesus away.

Luke 22:51-53 and John 18:11-12 tell us how Jesus responded to these men. He was submissive and healed the servant’s wound that Peter had inflicted.

Matt. 26:53-54; John 10:17-18 Jesus allowed himself to be taken so that Heavenly Father’s will could be accomplished—that Jesus would lay down his life for us.

Mark 14:64 The chief priests and elders of the Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy, a crime punishable by death. Blasphemy is being irreverent toward God or claiming to be equal to God.

Mark 14:60-63 The chief priests and elders thought it was blasphemous for Jesus to proclaim himself as the Christ.

Matt. 26:56 As Jesus was led from the garden, most of his disciples “*forsook him, and fled*”.

Matt. 26:58; John 18:15 However, Peter and John continued to follow him; it is assumed that the unnamed disciple in John 18:15 is John.

Matt. 26:69-74 When people outside Caiaphas’s palace said that Peter knew Jesus, he denied it.

Matt. 26:75; (see also Matt. 26:33-35) Peter wept bitterly when he recognized that he had denied Jesus three times.

Some of us, like Peter, sometimes deny our faith when severely tested. Consider what we can learn from Peter’s life after he denied the Lord as you read the words of

President Gordon B. Hinckley: “*My heart goes out to Peter. So many of us are so much like him. We pledge our loyalty; we affirm our determination to be of good courage; we declare, sometimes even publicly, that come what may we will do the right thing, that we will stand for the right cause, that we will be true to ourselves and to others. “Then the pressures begin to build. Sometimes these are social pressures. Sometimes they are personal appetites. Sometimes they are false ambitions. There is a weakening of the will. There is a softening of discipline. There is capitulation. And then there is remorse, followed by self-accusation and bitter tears of regret. ... “... If there be those throughout the Church who by word or act have denied the faith, I pray that you may draw comfort and resolution from the example*

of Peter, who, though he had walked daily with Jesus, in an hour of extremity momentarily denied the Lord and also the testimony which he carried in his own heart. But he rose above this and became a mighty defender and a powerful advocate. So, too, there is a way for any person to turn about and add his or her strength and faith to the strength and faith of others in building the kingdom of God” (“And Peter Went Out and Wept Bitterly,” Ensign, Mar. 1995, 2-4, 6).

Jesus was sentenced to be crucified.

Luke 23:6-7 When Pilate learned that Jesus was from Galilee, he sent him to Herod, who was a governor over Galilee.

Luke 23:8 Herod was “exceeding glad” to see Jesus because he knew of Jesus’ reputation and hoped to see a miracle performed.

Luke 23:9 The Savior responded with silence to Herod’s questions. (compare this verse with the prophecy in Isaiah 53:7)

Luke 23:11 After Herod and his men accused and mocked Jesus; they sent him back to Pilate.

Luke 23:13-17: see also Luke 23:4 Pilate’s judgment of Jesus was that he was without fault.

Matt. 27:15-24; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:18-25; John 19:1-16 Pilate gave in to mob pressure and sentenced Jesus to be crucified. Consider how we might, like Pilate, sometimes try to avoid responsibility for difficult decisions.

To one of Pilate’s questions about whether Jesus was a king, Jesus replied, *“To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth”* (John 18:37).

Ps. 24:10; Isaiah 44:6; Rev. 11:15; Rev. 15:3; 2 Nephi 10:14; John 18:36 Jesus is a King, but his *“kingdom is not of this world”*. According to these scriptures, Jesus is the king of Glory; the king of Israel; the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord; he is the king of saints; the true Messiah; and his kingdom is not of this world.

Jesus was scourged and crucified.

Matt. 27:27-44; Luke 23:34-39 After he was sentenced to be crucified, people mocked Jesus and persecuted him.

1 Nephi 19:9 Jesus allowed the people to persecute him because of his loving kindness and long suffering towards the children of men.

The scriptures record seven statements that Jesus made while on the cross.

1. **Luke 23:34.** *“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”*

From the Joseph Smith Translation we learn that when Jesus said this, he was praying for the Roman soldiers who had crucified him (Luke 23:34, footnote 34c). This reveals his loving nature. Of course, the worldly way to respond to people who hurt or offend us is to seek revenge or retribution. But as we know, we are blessed when we follow Jesus’ example of love.

2. **Luke 23:43.** To the repentant thief: *“Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”*

3. **John 19:26-27.** To his mother, Mary: *“Woman, behold thy son!”* To John: *“Behold thy mother!”*, thus revealing Jesus’ thoughts of the needs of others during his painful ordeal. We can learn from this to be less self-centered and more focused on others needs.

4. **Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34.** *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”*

Jesus' experience on the cross enabled him to understand and help us when we feel alone—because he has been alone in grief and pain. It is important to know that the Savior can bear not only our sins but also our loneliness, grief, and fear.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said: *“Because he must ultimately tread this winepress of redemption unaided, can he endure the darkest moment of them all, the shock of the greatest pain? This comes not with thorns and with nails, but with the terror of feeling utterly alone: ... ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ (Mark 15:34). Can he bear all of our sins and our fear and loneliness too? He did and he does and he will”* (Ensign, Nov. 1989, 26).

5. **John 19:28.** *“I thirst.”* Despite all that Jesus suffered, this was his only mention of physical discomfort. He was given vinegar when he said that he was thirsty. (See John 19:29.)

6. **John 19:30.** *“It is finished.”* According to the Joseph Smith Translation, Jesus said, *“Father, it is finished, thy will is done”* (Matt. 27:50, footnote 50a).

2 Nephi 9:5; 3 Nephi 27:13-16 The Savior had to die in order to accomplish Heavenly Father's will of having all men become subject to his Son and be their Redeemer.

President Spencer W. Kimball said: *“He needed to die, that he might open the graves of all men as his own tomb was opened. Without the deep darkness of the crucifixion hour, there could have been no spring of coming from the grave”* (Ensign, May 1975, 4).

7. **Luke 23:46.** *“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”*

Conclusion

The Savior's first recorded premortal words were *“Here am I, send me”* (Abraham 3:27). Among his first recorded mortal words were *“I must be about my Father's business”* (Luke 2:49). Among the last words he spoke in mortality were *“Father, it is finished, thy will is done”* (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 27:54; see Matt. 27:50, footnote 50a). Jesus never lost sight of his Father's will or his own mission. He could have called upon legions of angels to rescue him, but he did not (Matt. 26:53-54). Despite the agony, he never faltered in his humility and his willingness to accomplish the infinite Atonement.

“He Is Not Here, for He Is Risen”
Lesson 27 – Matthew 28; Luke 24; John 20

Introduction

Elder James M. Paramore: *“Many years ago ... a writer for a newspaper was asked an important question, ‘What would be the most important news the world could receive?’ ” Elder Paramore continued: “[The writer] thought and thought about the question, he talked to many people, and read all he could in an effort to find an answer for himself. And finally, he printed his answer, ‘To know that Jesus Christ lives today would be the most important news the world could receive. In fact, if He lives today, then we too will live eternally as He said’ ” (Ensign, Nov. 1990, 64).*

The disciples’ sorrow at Christ’s death was replaced with unspeakable joy at his Resurrection. We too can rejoice in the knowledge that Christ was resurrected.

Mary Magdalene and other women were witnesses of the resurrected Lord.

Matt. 27:57-60; Luke 23:50-53; John 19:38-42 After Jesus was crucified, his body was wrapped in clean linen cloths and placed in a tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, one of Jesus’ disciples. This was done quickly because the Sabbath was about to begin. The morning after the Sabbath, Mary Magdalene and other women returned to the tomb with spices and ointments to more thoroughly anoint and embalm Jesus’ body.

Matt. 28:1-4; Luke 24:1-4 Mary Magdalene and the other women, when they came to Jesus’ tomb, found angels at an open tomb. (The Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 28 states, as Luke does, that there were two angels. See Matt. 28:2, footnote 2a.)

Matt. 28:5-7; Luke 24:5-8 The angels told the women that 1) they knew the women sought Jesus, 2) Jesus was not there, but had risen from the grave, 3) they should look for themselves and see the empty tomb, 4) they should go quickly to tell his disciples of the resurrection, 5) they should expect to see the risen Lord in Galilee, and finally, 6) the angels had discharged their responsibility in delivering this message.

Alma 11:42-45 (see also Bible Dictionary, “Resurrection,” 761.) When the angels said, “He is risen”, they meant that Jesus had been resurrected. Alma explains what it means to be resurrected—that the spirit and body are reunited again in its perfect form and in an immortal state, not being subject to corruption again.

1 Corinthians 15:22, 50-58; Alma 11:42-45 Blessings we will receive because of Jesus’ Resurrection include the blessing that we will all be resurrected and be given immortal bodies.

President Howard W. Hunter said that the words *“He is not here, but is risen” (Luke 24:6)* *“contain all the hope, assurance, and belief necessary to sustain us in our challenging and sometimes grief-filled lives” (Ensign, May 1986, 15-16).*

Consider how your testimony of the Atonement and the Resurrection has helped you through difficult times.

Matt. 28:8; Luke 24:8-9 After the angels finished speaking, the women departed quickly, feeling a combination of fear and joy, to tell his disciples of the resurrection. As foretold by the angels, Mary and the other women were the first of many people who saw Jesus Christ after he was resurrected

2 Corinthians 13:1 It was important that the resurrected Lord appear to earthly witnesses to provide proof of his resurrection and to fulfill prophecies about his atonement and resurrection.

Two disciples on the road to Emmaus were witnesses of the resurrected Lord.

Luke 24:13-24 Cleopas and his companion were sad as they walked along the road to Emmaus because Jesus had been crucified and they had expected him to redeem Israel—which, it seems, in their opinion, had failed to come to pass.

Luke 24:25-27 The resurrected Lord taught them as they walked that all of this had been the subject of numerous prophecies—which he then expounded to them as they walked.

Luke 24:32 The two disciples felt their hearts burn within them as Jesus taught them. This feeling was the influence of the Holy Ghost. Consider your own experiences as you have received a witness from the Spirit while studying the gospel or hearing someone teach it. Didn't your heart burn as you felt the truth of gospel teachings?

The Apostles were witnesses of the resurrected Lord.

Luke 24:36-37 The Apostles thought they were seeing a spirit when the Savior appeared to them on the evening of the day he was resurrected.

Luke 24:38-43 Jesus reassured them that he was a resurrected being, not a spirit, by inviting them to feel his hands and assure themselves that he had a body of flesh and bone.

John 20:24-25 Thomas responded to the other Apostles' testimonies that the Lord had been resurrected with some disbelief.

John 20:26-29 Thomas came to believe that the Lord had been resurrected by seeing the risen Lord with his own eyes. Sometimes we may show the same weakness as Thomas and fail to believe the testimony of others.

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley said: *"Have you not heard others speak as Thomas spoke? 'Give us,' they say, 'the empirical evidence. Prove before our very eyes, and our ears, and our hands, else we will not believe.' This is the language of the time in which we live. Thomas the Doubter has become the example of men in all ages who refuse to accept other than that which they can physically prove and explain—as if they could prove love, or faith, or even such physical phenomena as electricity. ... "To all within the sound of my voice who may have doubts, I repeat the words given Thomas as he felt the wounded hands of the Lord: 'Be not faithless, but believing' "* (Ensign, May 1978, 59).

John 20:27 Consider carefully how you can more fully follow the Lord's admonition to "be not faithless, but believing". What can you do this week to accomplish that?

Some of the Apostles saw Jesus again at the Sea of Tiberias (Sea of Galilee).

John 21:4-7 The resurrected Lord showed himself again to seven of his Apostles as they were fishing. They came to realize it was Jesus on the shore when he directed them where to fish and they suddenly caught an abundance of fish after previously fishing in vain.

John 21:15-17 After they had eaten, Jesus ask Peter and the other Apostles to feed his sheep.

Today, we are also charged with the responsibility to feed the Lord's sheep through actively serving in our callings and giving selfless service outside our formal Church callings.

John 20:30-31 John's reason for writing down some of the things that the resurrected Jesus said and did was to help us believe in Christ. Consider carefully how you have benefited from studying the scriptural accounts of Jesus' Resurrection and pondering these great events.

Other witnesses of the resurrected Lord

In addition to the many witnesses mentioned in the Gospels, others who saw the resurrected Lord include:

Stephen (**Acts 7:55**)

More than 500 brethren (**1 Corinthians 15:6**)

The Apostle James (**1 Corinthians 15:7**)

The Apostle Paul (**1 Corinthians 15:8**)

2,500 Saints in the ancient Americas (**3 Nephi 11:8-15; 3 Nephi 17:25**)

The Prophet Joseph Smith (**Joseph Smith—History 1:17; D&C 76:22-24**)

Sidney Rigdon (**D&C 76:22-24**)

Conclusion

Jesus Christ was resurrected and because of him we will also be resurrected. This testimony and knowledge of the Resurrection brings us strength and comfort.

“We Are Witnesses”

Lesson 28 – Acts 1

Introduction

Today’s lesson is about the early Apostles, who were witnesses of the resurrected Jesus Christ. When they testified of him, many people believed them and were baptized into the Church. Now, we have a responsibility to be witnesses of Jesus Christ and allow the gift of the Holy Ghost to help us be effective witnesses.

The book of Acts is Luke’s account of important events in the Church during the 30 years or so following Jesus Christ’s mortal life. Luke tells of the resurrected Lord’s 40-day ministry and his Ascension. He then describes the great spiritual outpouring on the day of Pentecost, Peter’s leadership of the Church, the Apostles’ early missionary efforts, and Paul’s dramatic conversion. The second half of the book focuses on Paul’s missionary labors among the Gentiles.

The Lord ascended into heaven. Matthias was called to be an Apostle.

After Jesus was resurrected, he stayed with his disciples for 40 days, “speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3).

Acts 1:4-5 (see also Luke 24:49) Just before he returned to his Father in Heaven, he promised his Apostles that they would soon receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Although the Apostles had experienced *manifestations* of the Holy Ghost, they had not yet received the *gift* of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 1:8 Jesus told the Apostles that they were to be witness of him after they received the gift of the Holy Ghost. This instruction compares with the responsibility given to Apostles today (See D&C 107:23, 35.) to be special witnesses and proclaim the gospel to the world. The Apostles fulfilled this responsibility in the time just after Jesus’ Resurrection with some of the powerful testifying recorded in Acts 2.

John 15:26-27; 1 Cor. 12:3. The gift of the Holy Ghost helped the Apostles in their responsibility to be witnesses of Jesus Christ because no man can say Jesus is the Christ except by the Holy Ghost.

2 Nephi 33:1; D&C 42:14 Here, we see the role of the Holy Ghost in our efforts to teach the gospel—he testifies to the hearts of others and if we do not have the Spirit, we should not teach.

Acts 1:10-11 records that as the Apostles watched Jesus ascend into heaven, two men in white stood nearby. These men told the Apostles that he would come again. The Second Coming of Christ will be a literal event. Christ will return to the earth to usher in the Millennium and rule over the earth.

Acts 1:21-26 After the Lord’s Ascension, a new Apostle was chosen to fill the vacancy in the Quorum left by Judas. Matthias was chosen as the new Apostle through revelation. Apostles and other Church leaders are chosen today by being called of God (See Articles of Faith 1:5.)

On the day of Pentecost, the Apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost.

The Feast of Pentecost was a harvest celebration held 50 days after the Feast of the Passover. Jews from many nations came to Jerusalem for this feast. (See Bible Dictionary, "Feasts," 673.)

Acts 2:1-4 A significant event occurred on the day of Pentecost, one week after the Savior's Ascension when the Spirit gave them power to speak to the various groups in their own language using the gift of tongues. This fulfilled the Lord's promises in John 14:26, John 15:26, and John 16:7-14 and in Acts 1:5.

Acts 2:5-13 The people from every nation were confounded when they heard the Apostles speaking in various languages, while some accused the apostles of being drunken. The preaching of the gospel today is similar to the preaching on the day of Pentecost as the gospel is taught in many foreign tongues. (See **D&C 90:11; D&C 100:5-8**.)

Acts 2:14-24, 36 Peter responded to those who mocked the Apostles for speaking in tongues by reminding them of the prophecy of Joel and testifying of Christ's divinity. Peter's testimony was simple and sincere, motivated by the Spirit acting upon him. It is important to have a testimony of Jesus Christ and his divine mission for ourselves and to share with others. The Holy Ghost helps us share our testimonies by prompting us with what to say, when to say it, and how to say it.

Acts 2:37 Peter's testimony affected those who heard it so that they asked what they should do.

Acts 2:38 Peter taught the people who believed his testimony to repent, be baptized, and receive the Holy Ghost. (Compare Acts 2:38 to **Articles of Faith 1:4** and **3 Nephi 27:19-20**. The basic principles and ordinances of the gospel are the same in all dispensations.)

Acts 2:41-47 About 3,000 people believed Peter's words and were baptized. These people demonstrated that they had been converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ by accepting the doctrine, fellowshiping with the saints in meals and prayers, living the law of consecration, attending the temple, giving gratitude to God, and doing good to their fellowmen.

Peter and John healed a lame man by the power of Jesus Christ.

Acts 3:6, 12-13, 16; Acts 4:10 Even though Peter and John had no money to give to the lame man at the gate of the temple, they had priesthood blessings to offer him. Faith in Jesus Christ provided the power that made the man whole.

Acts 3:12-26; Acts 4:5-12 Peter used this miracle as an opportunity to testify of Jesus Christ. Consider what opportunities you have to testify of Christ and think about how you have been blessed as you have been a witness (or have heard others be witnesses) of Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:1-3 The priests and Sadducees responded to Peter's sermon by having Peter and John arrested.

Acts 4:4 Many of the multitude responded to the sermon with belief on those words. These two groups responded so differently to the same sermon—revealing something about the condition of their hearts. Our response to the words of Church leaders reveals much about the condition of our hearts, doesn't it?

Acts 4:13-14, 16 With the healed man standing by, the priests and Sadducees could not deny that a miracle had occurred.

Acts 4:15-18 Since they had no reason to imprison Peter and John, they threatened them in an effort to get them to cease preaching of Christ. The Jewish religious leaders had hoped that Jesus and his teachings would be forgotten after the Crucifixion. When the Apostles continued to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Jewish leaders tried to stop them.

Acts 4:19-20 Peter and John responded to the priests' and Sadducees' demand that they stop teaching the gospel by testifying that it was right in the sight of God for them to continue testifying about what they had seen and heard. There may arise circumstances in your life that might require similar courage in being a witness for Jesus Christ. If so, remember this example as you are challenged.

Acts 4:23-30 After Peter and John were released, they returned to the members of the Church and prayed with them.

Acts 4:29-30 In the prayer they asked for the Lord's protection and further signs and wonders.

Acts 4:31-35; Acts 5:12-16 As a result of this prayer and the Apostles' subsequent actions, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, bore powerful testimonies, received divine grace, and lived the law of consecration so that they had all things in common and received according to their needs.

The Apostles continued to preach and heal with great power.

Acts 5:17-18 When the Apostles continued to preach and work miracles, the priests and Sadducees cast them into prison.

Acts 5:19-20 They were released from prison by an angel of the Lord.

Acts 5:21, 25 After they were released, they went and taught in the temple.

Acts 5:29-32 The Apostles continued to preach the gospel even after being imprisoned because, as these verses teach, they were serving God rather than man.

Acts 5:33-39 Gamaliel gave counsel to the Jewish leaders who wanted to kill the Apostles that they should not harm these men, for it their work was the work of men, it would come to naught—but if their work was indeed of God, they surely should not fight against God.

Compare **Matt. 26:47-56, 69-75** with **Acts 4:5-21; Acts 5:17-18, Acts 5:26-42** Note the change the gift of the Holy Ghost brought about in the Apostles. Consider how the Apostles' examples can inspire you to be a powerful witness of the truth.

Conclusion

After the Apostles received the gift of the Holy Ghost, they became powerful witnesses of Jesus Christ. While Apostles have a special calling to be witnesses of Christ, each member of the Church also has the responsibility to bear witness of him. The Holy Ghost can help us know when and how to testify of Christ. As we follow the Spirit's promptings, our faith will increase, our sensitivity to the Spirit will grow, and we will become more effective witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ.

“The Number of Disciples Was Multiplied”

Lesson 29 – Acts 6

Introduction

Which part of your body do you think is most important? Why? Which member of the Church do you think is the most important? Why? Now read 1 Corinthians 12:12-21. In these verses the Apostle Paul compares the members of the Church to the parts of the body. Just as the foot, the hand, the ear, and the eye are important in their different functions, so are all members of the Church important with their different skills and talents. The work of the Church is done by many people, all of whom contribute their talents and testimonies to strengthen the Church.

Seven men were ordained to supervise the temporal work of the Church

Under the Apostles' direction the Church grew rapidly, making converts in many nations. This was cause for great rejoicing, but it also created some challenges. As the Church grew, the Apostles needed other members to help direct the Church and build up the kingdom of God. As the Church grew, groups within it sometimes had disagreements with each other.

Acts 6: 1 Some of the Greek members murmured against the Hebrew members because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. We as Church members need to overcome disagreements and divisions among us, whether they are based on ethnic, economic, cultural, or other differences.

2 Nephi 26:33; D&C 38:26-27 It is important that we overcome such divisions because *“all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile”*; and if we are not one, we are not Christ's.

President Howard W. Hunter said: *“It is in understanding and accepting [the] universal fatherhood of God that all human beings can best appreciate God's concern for them and their relationship to each other. This is a message of life and love that strikes squarely against all stifling traditions based on race, language, economic or political standing, educational rank, or cultural background, for we are all of the same spiritual descent. We have a divine pedigree; every person is a spiritual child of God”* (Ensign, Nov. 1991, 18).

Diversity among members enriches and strengthens the Church, so consider how we can differ from each other and still be unified.

Acts 6:2 The Apostles felt they should not take time from teaching the gospel to settle disputes and take care of other temporal business.

Acts 6:3-6 They resolved this problem by having seven faithful men selected to be responsible for the temporal work of the Church. It is important for the work of the Church to be shared among many people so that an overwhelming burden is not borne by a small group and so that all saints may have the opportunity to bless the lives of others through their service.

Some organizational changes the Lord has inspired latter-day Church leaders to make as the Church has grown include the addition of Quorums of the Seventy or the organization of the Church into areas presided over by Area Presidencies. These inspired changes have helped meet the needs of Church members throughout the world.

Stephen testified before the Sanhedrin and was stoned to death

Acts 6:11-15 Stephen, one of the seven men called to help the Twelve Apostles, was arrested on false charges of blasphemy (blasphemy is being irreverent toward God or sacred things) and he was brought before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council.

Acts 7:1-53 As Stephen faced the Sanhedrin; he recited part of the history of the Israelites, emphasizing the mighty deeds of the Lord in Israel's history. Stephen made sure that they could not forget the Lord's workings in the House of Israel. He knew that remembering past blessings from the Lord helps us remain faithful in the present.

Stephen also emphasized Israel's frequent forgetfulness and disobedience to God. In **Acts 7:51-53**, Stephen made a comparison between his listeners and the earlier disobedient Israelites.

Acts 7:54 records the people's reaction to his comparison as they were cut to the heart and gnashed on Stephen with their teeth.

Acts 7:55-56 Stephen received a vision after he finished speaking.

Acts 7:57-58 The people, when he told them of his vision, stopped up their ears, cried out in a loud voice, ran upon Stephen, cast him out of the city, and stoned him to death.

Acts 7:59-60 Stephen's last words of mercy reveal that his discipleship was sincere and complete.

Philip preached and performed miracles in Samaria

Acts 8:6-8, 12 Philip, another of the seven men chosen to help the Apostles, preached and performed miracles in Samaria; and the people of Samaria responded to Philip's message with joy. They believed his words and accepted baptism.

Acts 8:14-17 These people received the gift of the Holy Ghost at the hands of Peter and John.

Acts 8:9-11 One of the Samaritan converts was a sorcerer named Simon who gave himself credit for the acts he performed through sorcery.

Acts 4:7-10 The Apostles gave credit for the miracles they performed to Jesus Christ. This difference is significant because many people who compete for our attention and loyalty do so to glorify themselves. By contrast, God's servants give him the glory. Understanding this difference may help us evaluate the many influences in our lives.

Acts 8:18-19 Simon offered money for such a power when he saw the Apostles bestowing the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 8:20-23 Peter answered Simon's request with justified condemnation of such an evil offer.

Heb. 5:4 and D&C 121:36 tell us how a person becomes qualified to receive priesthood power—by obeying God and being called of God.

President James E. Faust said: *"This greatest of all powers, the priesthood power, is not accessed the way power is used in the world. It cannot be bought or sold. ... Worldly power often is employed ruthlessly. However, priesthood power is invoked only through those principles of righteousness by which the priesthood is governed"* (Ensign, May 1997, 43).

Acts 8:25-29 Philip met the Ethiopian eunuch because he followed the direction of the Spirit.

Acts 8:30-38 Blessings came to Philip and to the Ethiopian because Philip followed the Spirit—so Philip was able to baptize this faithful man. As you consider this, ponder the blessings that have come to you (or to someone you know) because you have followed the Spirit.

Acts 8:30-39 The Ethiopian demonstrated humility as he asked for someone to help him understand the scriptures and again as he asked to be baptized. Humility helps each of us understand and accept the word of God.

Saul was converted and baptized and began to preach the gospel

Saul was a Pharisee who actively persecuted the early Saints. He was present at the stoning of Stephen (**Acts 7:58**) and had been responsible for the imprisonment and death of many members of the Church (**Acts 8:3 and Acts 22:4**). However, he experienced a miraculous conversion and became a great missionary.

Acts 9:1-9, 17 Saul changed from a persecutor of the Saints to a great servant of the Lord and became converted when he heard the voice of the Lord.

D&C 1:38; D&C 6:23; D&C 8:2; and D&C 18:34-36 teach us how we can hear the voice of the Lord.

Conversion is often a quiet, gradual experience, not a sudden, miraculous experience like Saul's. **Elder Robert D. Hales** said, "*On occasion individuals can have [experiences like Saul's], but for the most part, conversion happens over a period of time as study, prayer, experience, and faith help us to grow in our testimony and conversion*" (*Ensign*, May 1997, 80).

Elder Ezra Taft Benson said that Paul's question, "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" is the most important question we can ask in this life (*Ensign*, Jan. 1973, 57).

Acts 9:10-16 records that Ananias was hesitant to go meet Saul, but went despite his reservations because the Lord instructed him to go. We should learn from Ananias' actions that God can give us courage to do whatever he asks of us and that we should never give up on a person, even if he or she appears to be beyond spiritual help.

Acts 9:17-18 Ananias blessed Saul with his sight and a command to be filled with the Holy Ghost.

Acts 9:19-22 Saul began to be a missionary for Christ immediately after he was baptized and then joined the apostles in Jerusalem. Our responsibilities, once we have been converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ, are to strengthen others, continue in his word, live our baptismal covenants, and to warn our neighbors. (See Luke 22:32; John 8:31; Mosiah 18:8-10; D&C 88:81.)

Conclusion

We, like Stephen, Philip, and Saul, are living in a time when the Church is growing rapidly. The Lord wants each of us to serve in his kingdom as it grows. Recognize and appreciate the different qualities, talents, and experiences that each ward or branch member brings to the Lord's service.

“God Is No Respector of Persons”

Lesson 30 – Acts 10; Acts 15:1-35

How would you answer if I gave you the following clues, one at a time, and asked you to determine what significant event in Church history they refer to: 1) Revelation; 2) 8 June 1978; 3) President Spencer W. Kimball; 4) Priesthood; and finally, 5) Official Declaration 2

Turn to Official Declaration 2, located at the end of the Doctrine and Covenants, and read the second paragraph (beginning with “In early June”). That Official Declaration 2 records the revelation that made the priesthood available to all worthy male members of the Church.

Who made the priesthood available to all worthy male members of the Church? The Lord. How did the Lord make his will known to the Church? He revealed it to the prophet, who then announced it to the Church members. How did this revelation affect the Church? It allowed growth in many areas of the world—especially African nations—so that gospel blessings could be given to all worthy members. This revelation is an example of how the Lord continues to direct his Church through revelation. Today’s lesson discusses a similar revelation that was given to the members of the Church shortly after the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Peter learned in a vision that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles.

Acts 10:1-2; 30-31 Cornelius was a righteous man who believed in God, but he was a Gentile (non-Jew).

Acts 10:3-6 The angel’s message to Cornelius was for him to call to Peter.

Acts 10:7-8, 33 Cornelius reacted to this message with immediate obedience. Note: Consider his example when you have promptings from the Spirit.

Acts 10:9-16 records that while Cornelius’s men were traveling to Joppa, Peter had a vision.

Acts 10:11-12 In the vision; Peter saw what he considered unclean or common animals.

Acts 10:13-14 Peter was told to kill and eat. But Peter resisted because he did not want to eat animals that were considered unclean under the Law of Moses.

Acts 10:15-16 The Lord responded to Peter’s concern by assuring Peter that God had cleansed them.

Acts 10:28, 34-35 As he met with Cornelius, Peter understood his dream to mean that the gospel was for all people, not just the Jews. *“God is no respecter of persons”* means that God will provide every person with the opportunity to receive the blessings available through the plan of salvation. The Gentiles were represented in the dream by unclean animals because the Jews thought the Gentiles were spiritually unworthy or unclean, like the animals that the Law of Moses forbade Jews to eat. By saying that the animals in the dream were now *“cleansed,”* the Lord was telling Peter that the gospel should now be preached to all people.

Acts 10:36-43 After Peter explained his dream, he began teaching Cornelius and his friends. His first sermon to them was about the Savior.

Acts 10:44, 46 As Peter was preaching, the Holy Ghost fell upon them.

Acts 10:47-48 (also see Acts 11:15-17) This convinced Peter that Cornelius and his friends should be baptized because they had received the Holy Ghost, just like the other disciples.

Acts 11:1-3 Some Church members reacted badly when they heard that Peter had been teaching the gospel to Gentiles. These members were upset because they did not consider the Gentiles to be part of God's chosen people.

Acts 11:4-18 Church members' opinions changed and they accepted this new circumstance after Peter told them about his vision and his experience with Cornelius.

John 7:17; 2 Nephi 28:30; D&C 6:11, 14-15 When we receive new instructions from our Church leaders, even if we initially dislike the instructions or find them difficult to understand, we should obey the instructions, pray, and seek further inspiration and enlightenment.

Peter was the one who received the revelation to teach the gospel to the Gentiles because he was the leader of the Church at that time, just as Pres. Hinckley receives revelation today for the entire Church.

D&C 43:2-6 It is important to have only one person who receives revelation for the entire Church, so that we may not be deceived.

Peter was miraculously freed from prison.

Acts 12:1-4 King Herod killed the Apostle James, then cast Peter into prison under heavy guard.

Acts 12:5 Members of the Church responded to Peter's imprisonment with prayers to God.

D&C 43:12; D&C 93:51; D&C 107:22 Our prayers help the prophet and other Church leaders today.

President Joseph F. Smith stated, *"There never should be a day pass but all of the people composing the Church should lift up their voices in prayer to the Lord to sustain his servants"* (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 223).

Acts 12:6-10 Peter escaped from prison when an angel led him to freedom. Other times when the Lord has miraculously preserved someone's life until that person completed his or her earthly mission include these examples from the scriptures: Daniel; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; Abinadi; Alma and Amulek; and Joseph Smith.

Acts 12:21-23 After Peter's escape, Herod was struck dead by an angel of the Lord. Compare what happened to Herod with what happened to the Church, as described in the next verse 24—the word of God grew and multiplied.

Saul (now known as Paul) and Barnabas preached the gospel to the Gentiles

Acts 13:1-3 The calling of Saul and Barnabas shows how Church members are called to God's service.

There is a need for prayer and fasting, revelation, and priesthood authority in calling members to serve in the Church.

Acts 13:14-15 The rulers of the synagogue in Antioch invited Paul to speak in the Sabbath service

Acts 13:23-31, 38-41 Paul's main message was the need to accept Jesus, the promised Messiah.

Acts 13:42-44, 48 The Gentiles in Antioch responded to the missionaries and their message with a request for them to stay and preach more on the next Sabbath.

Acts 13:45-47 Some of the Jews persecuted Paul and Barnabas for what they considered false doctrine.

Acts 14:8-13 The people in Lystra reacted by acclaiming Paul and Barnabas as gods when Paul healed the crippled man. Jupiter and Mercurius were false gods the people worshiped.

Acts 14:14-18 Paul and Barnabas responded to this praise and attention with great concern. True teachers of the word of God always seek to give God the glory and turn attention away from themselves.

Acts 13:43-45, 50; Acts 14:1-6, 19 In each city Paul and Barnabas visited, they found people eager to accept the gospel, but they also found people who persecuted them and stirred up others against the Church.

Acts 14:21-23 Paul and Barnabas returned to each of the cities even though they had been persecuted because they had established branches of the Church in the cities, and they returned to encourage and instruct the new members of these branches.

President Gordon B. Hinckley remarked: *"With the ever increasing number of converts, we must make an increasingly substantial effort to assist them as they find their way. Every one of them needs three things: a friend, a responsibility, and nurturing with 'the good word of God' (Moro. 6:4). It is our duty and opportunity to provide these things"* (Ensign, May 1997, 47).

The Apostles determined that Gentiles did not need to keep the Law of Moses.

Acts 15:1-2 Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to resolve the issue of circumcision (See also Bible Dictionary, "Circumcision," 646.) Circumcision was symbolic of the entire Law of Moses. A circumcised man was one who kept the law. Although Jesus Christ had fulfilled the Law of Moses, some Jewish Christians still practiced it and wanted Gentile converts to practice it as well. The dispute was resolved when, after a thorough discussion, the Apostles decided through inspiration not to require circumcision.

The events described in **Acts 15:6-31** demonstrate the pattern by which decisions about Church policy and practices are made: 1) Church leaders meet to consider the matter (verse 6); 2) They discuss the matter thoroughly (verses 7-21); 3) They make a decision in accordance with the Lord's will (verses 19-21); 4) The Holy Ghost confirms that the decision is correct (verse 28); 5) The decision is announced to the Saints for sustaining (verses 22-31).

Conclusion

The Church has always been guided by divine revelation and that revelation continues today. Follow the counsel of the living prophet and other Church leaders as they speak for the Lord.

“And So Were the Churches Established in the Faith”

Lesson 31 – Acts 15:36-Acts 18; 1 Thessalonians; 2 Thessalonians 1

Introduction

While living with the Heywood family in Salt Lake City during the late 1800s, John Morgan dreamed one night that he was traveling down a road in Georgia. He recognized the road because he had used it often as a soldier in the United States Civil War. He came to a fork in the road and saw Brigham Young standing there. Although the right fork led to the next town, President Young told him to take the left fork. Mr. Morgan, who was not a member of the Church at the time, told Sister Heywood about his dream and asked what she thought of it. She told him she believed he would join the Church and serve a mission in the southern states, and that one day he would find himself on the road he had seen in his dream. When that happened, he should remember Brigham Young’s counsel and take the left fork. Many years later, after John Morgan had been baptized and called as a missionary to the southern states, he came to the fork in the road that he had seen in his dream. He remembered the counsel to take the left fork, so he did. An hour later, he found himself at the edge of Heywood Valley—a beautiful place with the same name as the family with whom he had been staying when he had the dream years earlier. As he traveled throughout the valley preaching, he found that the people were well prepared to hear the gospel. After hearing him teach, several families mentioned that a stranger had come through the valley ten days before, asking permission to mark their Bibles. The stranger had told them that another messenger would come and explain the marked passages to them. John Morgan had explained these marked passages as he taught the gospel. During the following weeks, Elder Morgan taught and baptized all but three of the twenty-three families in the valley. (Bryant S. Hinckley, *The Faith of Our Pioneer Fathers* [1956], 242-44.)

John Morgan’s success as a missionary can be attributed to the fact that he was willing to work hard, he listened to the Spirit, and the people’s hearts had been prepared to accept the gospel.

This lesson is about the Apostle Paul, who, like John Morgan, listened to the Spirit and was a successful missionary. On his second missionary journey, Paul suffered many persecutions but also found many people who were prepared to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy preached throughout Macedonia and Greece.

The book of Acts was written by Luke. He apparently traveled with Paul on some missionary journeys, because he often uses “we” when referring to the actions of Paul and his missionary companions.

During his second missionary journey, Paul preached in many Macedonian and Greek cities, including Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, and Athens. (Find these cities on your Bible maps.)

Acts 16:6-10; Acts 18:9-11 The Spirit directed Paul and his companions during the journey. As you have served the Lord, you may well remember times when the Spirit has directed your efforts.

Acts 16:14-15 The scriptures record that Lydia heard and believed Paul's words because the Lord had opened her heart.

Mosiah 2:9; D&C 64:34 An "open heart" is necessary for converts to understand the gospel.

Acts 16:16-24 Paul and his companions were imprisoned in Thyatira because they cast out a spirit that was in a soothsayer—thereby causing her masters to lose money. Then they were falsely accused.

Acts 16:25-26 They were freed by an earthquake that shook the prison foundations.

Acts 16:27-34 They used this experience as a missionary opportunity with the keeper of the prison and those of his household. Often, our Church history shows that good has come out of persecution.

Acts 17:1-3 Paul taught the Thessalonians about Jesus in the synagogue for three Sabbaths.

Acts 17:4-10 Results of Paul's teachings were that some believed, but others—unbelieving Jews—were envious and created an uproar with false accusations. The Apostles then left for Berea.

Acts 17:10-12 The people in the synagogue in Berea received Paul's teachings with "*all readiness of mind*", being a more noble and honorable group who searched the scriptures daily. Think about how you can develop a "readiness of mind" for learning the gospel.

Paul preached on Mars' Hill to the Athenian philosophers.

After Paul left Berea, he came to Athens, which was then a center of world culture. Philosophers there viewed God as an abstract being or power, rather than as the literal Father of our spirits. They worshiped God's creations rather than God himself. They replaced revelation with reason and debate, valuing the wisdom of men more than the truths of God.

Acts 17:21 The philosophers in Athens "*spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing*". This tendency to always seeking "some new thing" is evident today.

Acts 17:22-31 (see also the Joseph Smith Translation of Acts 17:27 in footnote 27b.) Paul taught the Athenians about God and our relationship to Him. It is important to know that "we are [God's] offspring" (Acts 17:28) because an understanding of God's true nature and his role as our Father helps us love and worship him.

1 Corinthians 2:4-5, 10-13 Paul countered the philosophers' reason and logic with a sincere witness of God, our Father. In teaching the gospel, a sincere testimony is more convincing than logic and reason because the Spirit will bear witness to our audience as we bear our testimonies of the gospel.

Acts 17:18-21 The philosophers listened to Paul because his doctrine was strange and new to them.

Acts 17:32-33 This motive affected their response to Paul's message. By cultivating faith and a sincere desire to hear the truth, we can prepare ourselves to hear and understand the words of Church leaders.

Paul wrote letters of counsel to the Saints in Thessalonica.

1 Thes. 2:17-18; 1 Thes. 3:1-2, 5-7 Paul was concerned about the Saints in Thessalonica but was unable to return to visit them, so he sent Timothy. After Timothy's return, Paul wrote two letters giving counsel and encouragement to the

Thessalonian Saints. We learn from Paul's efforts in behalf of new members of the Church that we need to support them with love, fellowship, and teaching.

1 Thes. 1:5; 1 Thes. 2:2-12 Paul teaches in these verses that we must teach the gospel to others with the Spirit and with truth. Think about how following these principles has helped you teach the gospel.

1 Thes. 4:13-18; 1 Thes. 5:1-3 The Thessalonian Saints' concerns about their deceased loved ones and the timing of the Second Coming are reflected in Paul's explanations of the Second Coming.

2 Thes. 2:1-4 Paul told the Thessalonians that an apostasy would occur before the Second Coming.

D&C 1:15-16; D&C 112:23; Joseph Smith-History 1:19 These verses demonstrate how this prophecy of an apostasy was fulfilled.

1 Thes. 5:4-8 Paul told the Thessalonian Saints they should be sober and watchful, faithful and loving, and hopeful for salvation to prepare for the Second Coming. Of course, we should do the same.

1 Thes. 4:9-12; 1 Thes. 5:11-22 Paul gave counsel to the Thessalonians about living as Saints, encouraging them to love and care for one another as brothers, working hard with their own hands, studying to be quiet, minding their own business, and being honest that all might have their needs met.

Teaching the gospel with the right attitude

1 Thes 2:2-3 Paul said the gospel should be taught with boldness and without deceit or trickery.

Elder James E. Talmage added that we should boldly teach the truth without criticizing or attacking other people's beliefs. When he was a student, Elder Talmage was once approached by a man offering to sell him an excellent oil lamp. Elder Talmage already had a lamp he felt was satisfactory, but he allowed the lamp seller to come up to his room to demonstrate. *"We entered my room, and I put a match to my well-trimmed lamp. My visitor was high in his praise. It was the best lamp of its kind, he said, and he had never seen a lamp in better trim. He turned the wick up and down, and pronounced the judgment perfect. 'Now,' he said, 'with your permission I'll light my lamp,' taking it from his satchel. ... Its light made bright the remotest corner of my room. Its brilliant blaze made the flame in my lamp weak and pale. Until that moment of convincing demonstration I had never known the dim obscurity in which I had lived and labored, studied and struggled. Elder Talmage bought the new lamp, and he later suggested what we can learn from the lamp seller as we teach the gospel: "The man who would sell a lamp did not disparage mine. He placed his greater light alongside my feebler flame, and I hastened to obtain it. The missionary servants of the Church of Jesus Christ today are sent forth, not to assail nor ridicule the beliefs of men, but to set before the world a superior light, by which the smoky dimness of the flickering flames of man-made creeds shall be apparent. The work of the Church is constructive, not destructive"* (in Albert L. Zobell Jr., *Story Gems* [1953], 45-48; see also *The Parables of James E. Talmage*, comp. Albert L. Zobell Jr. [1973], 1-6)

Conclusion

Paul taught about the qualities that successful missionaries and compassionate Latter-day Saints should possess. We should seek to develop these qualities so they can help us prepare ourselves and others for the Lord's Second Coming.

“Live in the Spirit”

Lesson 32 — Acts 18:23 – 20:38; Galatians

Introduction

Think of a talent or skill such as playing an instrument, sewing, writing, or playing a sport that you once developed but have not used for a long time. Would you feel comfortable using that talent or skill today? How successful would you be? What would you need to do to use that talent or skill as well as you did in the past? Recognizing the promptings of the Holy Ghost can be thought of as a spiritual talent or ability. The more we use this spiritual talent, the better we become at it. We can develop the ability to recognize the promptings of the Holy Ghost by living righteously, by seeking inspiration through the Holy Ghost, and by obeying promptings when we receive them. Today’s discussion of Paul’s third missionary journey and his letter to the Galatians will review situations in which we need to follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost and how we can be blessed by doing so.

Paul taught, baptized, and conferred the Holy Ghost on believers in Ephesus.

Acts 18: 22-23 After Paul returned from his second mission, he spent some time in Antioch and then departed on a third mission. During this third mission he spent most of his time—nearly three years—preaching in Ephesus.

Apollos was a Jew who knew about baptism as taught by John the Baptist but did not know about the gift of the Holy Ghost. When Aquila and Priscilla, two members of the Church who were in Ephesus, heard Apollos preaching, they taught him *“the way of God more perfectly”* (Acts 18:26).

Acts 18:24-28 The qualities that made Apollos teachable included his knowledge of the scriptures and his desire to follow the Spirit. These qualities also made him an effective teacher because he was prepared and he responded to the Spirit.

Acts 19:6 A spiritual manifestation occurred when some of the Ephesians received the gift of the Holy Ghost—the gift of tongues and the gift of prophecy were received.

Acts 2:1-4; Acts 10:44-46 This kind of manifestation occurred at other times—when the Apostles spoke in tongues when they received the gift of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost and when several Gentiles in Caesarea also spoke in tongues after Peter received a vision that the gospel should be taught to the Gentiles.

D&C 6:15, 23; D&C 8:2 (also see 1 Kings 19:12) Manifestations of the Holy Ghost frequently experienced today included inspiration and enlightenment and the personal witness of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost also speaks to our hearts and minds.

Acts 19:8-9 Paul left the synagogue in Ephesus and began teaching in the school of Tyrannus because many hardened their hearts to his message. (Note: *disputing* in these verses means preaching or reasoning.)

3 Nephi 11:29-30 We should respond to people who criticize or oppose the gospel with testimony and truth, but not contention or ill will.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton taught: *“When others disagree with our stand we should not argue, retaliate in kind, or contend with them. ... Ours is to explain our position through reason, friendly persuasion, and accurate facts. Ours is to stand firm and unyielding on the moral issues of the day and the eternal principles of the gospel, but to contend with no man or organization. Contention builds walls*

and puts up barriers. Love opens doors. ... Contention never was and never will be an ally of progress”
(*Ensign*, May 1978, 7-8).

Acts 19:23-28 Demetrius and the other silversmiths were upset with Paul’s preaching because they were creating and selling shrines for Diana, a false goddess, and were worried about losing customers as Paul helped people become converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Concerns about material wealth or other worldly interests can affect our loyalty to God and such concerns may affect our ability to hear the promptings of the Spirit. It is up to us to prevent that possibility.

Acts 19:18-19 Compare the attitudes of Demetrius and the silversmiths to the attitude of the Ephesians who destroyed their sorcery books when they began following Jesus Christ. We need to keep the proper perspective regarding earthly possessions.

Paul gave a farewell address to Church leaders from Ephesus.

Paul left Ephesus and traveled throughout Macedonia and Greece, preaching the gospel. He planned to return to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. On his way back to Jerusalem, he sent a messenger to ask Church leaders in Ephesus to meet with him in Miletus. He delivered a stirring farewell address and then resumed his journey.

Acts 20:28-35 Believing that this would be the last time he would speak to the Ephesian elders, Paul emphasized staying in tune with the Spirit to avoid apostasy and being charitable in his farewell address.

Acts 20:29 The “grievous wolves” Paul warned about were enemies of the Church.

Acts 20:30 Paul also warned about members of the Church who would apostatize and try to lead other members away. Still—today, we need to guard against apostasy in our lives.

Acts 20:28; See also John 21:15-17 Paul told the Ephesian elders that they should feed the church of God to help protect Church members from those who would try to lead them away from the Church.

Paul concluded his address to the Ephesian brethren by reminding them of the Lord’s teaching that “*it is more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20:35). Consider how you have found this to be true.

Paul chastised and counseled the Galatian Saints.

While Paul was on his third missionary journey, he wrote a letter to the Saints in Galatia, many of whom had returned to keeping the law of Moses. He chastised those who believed that salvation could come through the works required by the law of Moses rather than through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gal. 3:23-26; Jacob 4:4-5; Mosiah 13:29-30 The Lord’s purpose in giving the law of Moses to the Israelites was to help them remember him and to prepare them to receive salvation through his Atonement.

3 Nephi 15:2-5; Alma 34:10; 3 Nephi 9:19 The law of Moses was fulfilled by Jesus through his Atonement, which was symbolized by many of the law’s ordinances.

Gal. 1:6; Gal. 4:9 Paul was amazed that the Galatian Saints had returned to the law of Moses so soon after having learned the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Gal. 2:16; Gal. 3:1-5; Gal 5:1-6 This return to the law of Moses showed a lack of faith in the Lord because they were putting their faith in observances and actions rather than in the mercy and teachings of Christ.

Gal 1:7-8 In Paul’s day, some people sought to pervert, or change, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Gal 1:11-12 We learn from these verses that we receive a testimony of the gospel from the Spirit through personal revelation. It is important that our testimonies are based on revelation from Jesus Christ because that is the only sure foundation. Some testimonies are built on other foundations, such as social relationships or intellectual analysis, but those often do not withstand trials of faith.

Gal. 5:19-21 Paul warned the Galatians against doing “*the works of the flesh*”. The works of the flesh were listed as adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such.

Gal. 5:21 Consequences of doing these works include banishment for the kingdom of God. Despite the prevalence of the works of the flesh in the world today, think about what you can do this week to improve the spiritual environment you live in.

Gal. 5:16, 25 Paul encouraged the Galatians to seek the fruits, or results, of living by the Spirit.

Gal. 5:22-23 The fruits of the Spirit include love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. Are these fruits manifest in your life?

Gal. 5:14; Gal. 6:2; see also Mosiah 18:8-10 Paul taught the Galatian Saints to treat their neighbors just as they themselves would want to be treated and to “bear ... one another’s burdens”. Helping our brethren makes their lives easier and brings us closer to Jesus Christ.

Gal. 6:7; see also D&C 63:58 When Paul said that “*God is not mocked*”, one meaning of his words is that those who disobey God and do not repent are mocking him and will be punished.

Gal. 6:7-9 “*Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*” teaches a principle that applies to our ability to hear and follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost; to our relationships with other people; and to other situations in our lives because our behavior and attitudes will come back to us—whether good or bad.

Conclusion

Unrighteous attitudes and actions, such as contention, worldliness, and apostasy, will prevent us from receiving promptings from the Holy Ghost. But if we strive to live righteously and follow the promptings we do receive, our ability to recognize and follow promptings will increase. This week, do your part to seek and follow promptings from the Holy Ghost.

“Ye Are the Temple of God”

Lesson 33 – 1 Corinthians 1-6

Introduction

The following experience was related by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin: *“While traveling along a mountainous road one evening through a driving rainstorm punctuated with frequent claps of thunder and flashes of lightning, Sister Wirthlin and I could barely see the road, either in front of us or to the right and the left. I watched the white lines on that road more intently than ever before. Staying within the lines kept us from going onto the shoulder and into the deep canyon on the one side and helped us avoid a head-on collision on the other. To wander over either line could have been very dangerous. Then I thought, ‘Would a right-thinking person deviate to the left or the right of a traffic lane if he knew the result would be fatal? If he valued his mortal life, certainly he would stay between these lines.’ ‘That experience traveling on this mountain road is so like life. If we stay within the lines that God has marked, he will protect us, and we can arrive safely at our destination”* (Ensign, Nov. 1990, 64).

At the time Paul wrote his first epistle to the Saints in Corinth, some of them had begun to stray outside the lines of the gospel. This lesson will discuss Paul’s exhortations for the Saints to repent of three of the ways they had begun to stray—through *Contention and disunity*, *Relying on the wisdom of the world*, and *Immorality*. We should always remember to seek the blessings that come from being unified in Christ, following the Spirit, and being morally clean.

Avoid contention and be unified.

1 Cor. 1:10-13 Paul addressed the problem of contention and disunity in these verses. Some of the Saints claimed to be “of Paul,” some “of Apollos,” some “of Cephas [Peter],” and some “of Christ”. Instead of being unified as followers of Jesus Christ, some of the Saints divided themselves into groups or factions within the Church. We sometimes make this same error.

Mosiah 18:21-22; 3 Nephi 11:29-30; D&C 38:27 Divisions and contention affect our fellowship as disciples of Christ because they cause us to forget that we are all children of God; they stir up anger; and they keep us away from Christ because, if we are not one, we are not his.

1 Cor. 1:10 Paul counseled the Saints to do some specific things to be more unified:

- *“Speak the same thing.”*
- *Have “no divisions among you.”*
- *“Be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”*

1 Cor. 3:1-4 The Corinthian Saints received only the “milk” of the gospel because they were not ready for spiritually mature teachings. Contention prevents us from receiving the “meat” of the gospel because it causes us to act like immature children. We can prepare ourselves to be fed the “meat” of the gospel by seeking the Spirit and behaving in a Christlike manner.

1 Cor. 3:5-11 Paul taught that there are many ministers (servants) of the gospel but that Jesus Christ is the only sure foundation.

Helaman 5:12 It is important that we have the Savior as the foundation for our faith because he is the only one who can protect us from the temptations and afflictions of Satan.

Rely on the Spirit rather than the wisdom of the world.

1 Cor. 1:18-21 Paul taught that God's wisdom will "make foolish" the wisdom of the world.

Isaiah 55:8-9; D&C 38:1-2 God's wisdom differs from the world's wisdom because He knows all things.

In some ways, secular (nonreligious) learning can be a blessing to us as it provides training for the job market, but it can also be a stumbling block to us if we listen to all that some vain learned men teach and theorize as if it were true.

2 Nephi 9:28-29 We can properly balance secular and spiritual learning if we hearken to God first. **President Spencer W. Kimball** taught: *"There is opportunity to get both [secular and spiritual learning] simultaneously. ... If we spend our mortal days in accumulating secular knowledge to the exclusion of the spiritual then we are in a dead-end street, for this is the time for man to prepare to meet God; this is the time for faith to be built, for baptism to be effected, for the Holy Ghost to be received, for the ordinances to be performed. Contemporary with this program can come the secular knowledge, for even in the spirit world after death our spirits can go on learning"* (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 390).

1 Cor. 1:27 Paul said that God had chosen "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise" and "the weak things of the world to confound the ... mighty". God often chooses the "*weak things of the world*" to fulfill his purposes because they are the individuals who rely on the Spirit more than on worldly strength.

1 Cor. 2:1-3 Paul faced the weaknesses of inadequate speech, lack of wisdom, and fear as he taught the gospel.

1 Cor. 2:2, 4-5 Paul's weaknesses were made into strengths as he relied on the power of God.

1 Cor. 2:10-13 According to Paul, we know the "things of God" through the Spirit of God. Because we are human, we sometimes rely more on our own wisdom and intellect than on revelation through the Spirit, but we miss powerful learning opportunities if we fail to rely on spiritual learning.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: *"Pure religion is a thing of the Spirit and not of the intellect alone, and its truths must be carried into the hearts of hearers by the power of the Spirit, otherwise the human soul is not changed ... and the seeker after salvation does not become alive in Christ"* (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1966-73], 2:318).

1 Cor. 2:14 Paul taught that it is impossible for the "natural man" to receive the things of God because the natural man thinks spiritual things are foolishness.

Mosiah 3:19 To overcome the natural man, we must become saints through the atonement, become as humble as a child, be submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, and obedient to the Father.

Be morally clean.

1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 6:19-20 Paul compared our bodies to a temple of God. This is an appropriate comparison because the flesh is the abode of the spirit.

1 Cor. 6:9 In his warning against many serious sins of his day, Paul included several sexual sins.

D&C 42:23; D&C 59:6 God's law of sexual morality requires that we be free of lust and adultery.

Elder Richard G. Scott said: *"Any sexual intimacy outside of the bonds of marriage—I mean any intentional contact with the sacred, private parts of another's body, with or without clothing—is a sin and is forbidden by God. It is also a transgression to intentionally stimulate these emotions within your own body"* (Ensign, Nov. 1994, 38).

The following quotations explain why sexual sins are so serious:

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin taught: *"One of the most pervasive deceptions in recent years is the notion that immorality is normal and acceptable and has no negative consequences. In truth, immorality is the underlying cause of much suffering and many other problems that are prevalent today, including rampant disease, abortion, broken families, families without fathers, and mothers who themselves are children"* (Ensign, Nov. 1994, 76).

Elder Boyd K. Packer taught: *"[Satan] knows that this power of creation is not just an incident to the plan, but the key to it. He knows that if he can entice you to use this power prematurely, to use it too soon, or to misuse it in any way, you may well lose your opportunities for eternal progression"* (Ensign, July 1972,).

Paul counseled the Saints *"not to company [associate] with fornicators"* (1 Cor. 5:9). This counsel applies to us because the friends and forms of entertainment we choose can affect our desire and ability to be morally clean. We avoid immoral influences by associating ourselves only with righteous friends and virtuous activities.

As we know, Satan tries to persuade us that there are exceptions to God's laws of morality...

Elder Richard G. Scott said: *"Satan tempts one to believe that there are allowable levels of physical contact between consenting individuals who seek the powerful stimulation of emotions they produce, and if kept within bounds, no harm will result. As a witness of Jesus Christ, I testify that is absolutely false. ... Decide what you will and will not do. When temptation comes, do not change your standards"* (Ensign, Nov. 1994, 38).

1 Cor. 10:13 assures us that we can withstand Satan's temptations.

1 Cor. 6:11; Isaiah 1:18; D&C 58:42 The Atonement of Jesus Christ offers those who repent of sexual sin the opportunity to be forgiven, washed clean, sanctified, and have his sins remembered no more.

Conclusion

Like Paul, the apostles and prophets of our day continue to teach us what we should do to stay within the boundaries the Lord has set. If you review past issues of the *Ensign*, you will find conference addresses in which the prophet or one of the apostles spoke on a topic Paul dealt with in his letter to the Corinthians, such as avoiding contention, relying on the Spirit, or staying morally clean. You will be blessed as you apply counsel from Paul or one of the latter-day apostles or prophets.

“Keep the Ordinances, As I Delivered Them”

Lesson 34 – 1 Corinthians 11-16

Introduction

A railroad switch point is a location on a railroad track where a train can be switched from one track to another. The following experience was related by Elder Gordon B. Hinckley: *“Many years ago I worked in the head office of one of our railroads. One day I received a telephone call from my counterpart in Newark, New Jersey, who said that a passenger train had arrived without its baggage car. The patrons were angry. “We discovered that the train had been properly made up in Oakland, California, and properly delivered to St. Louis, from which station it was to be carried to its destination on the east coast. But in the St. Louis yards, a thoughtless switchman had moved a piece of steel just three inches. That piece of steel was a switch point, and the car that should have been in Newark, New Jersey, was in New Orleans, Louisiana, thirteen hundred miles away”* (Ensign, Jan. 1973, 91). How could such a seemingly small change (three inches) have such a significant effect on the location of the baggage car (1300 miles)? As you consider this, think about some potential switch points in your life—events, decisions, new knowledge, or anything that changes the direction of your life. Switch points can be negative if they lead you from the truth or positive if they put you back on the right track.

The last chapters of Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians address four doctrinal switch points where the Corinthians had departed from the truth. As you study Paul’s teachings in these chapters, you can strengthen your commitment to follow the path of righteousness that will lead to our Father in Heaven. Recognize the importance of living according to the doctrines of the gospel and receiving priesthood ordinances.

Husbands’ and wives’ relationships with each other and with the Lord

1 Cor. 11:3 Paul spoke of three relationships—1) man and Christ, 2) man and woman, and 3) Christ and his Father. Paul included all of these relationships together because they are all vital to achieving salvation and exaltation.

John 5:20; John 8:29; John 17:21-22 Qualities that exist in the relationship between Jesus Christ and his Father include love, concern for each other, a close companionship, and a unity of purpose. These are qualities that we can develop in our relationship with Jesus Christ. Husbands and wives can also develop these qualities in their relationship.

1 Cor. 11:11 teaches that *“neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord”*—they must be as one. This relationship of husband and wife is so important in the kingdom of God because the family is the basic unit in the kingdom of God and provides the purpose for eternal existence. The importance of this relationship should give us enlightenment about how husbands and wives should treat each other—as equal and indispensable partners.

President Marion G. Romney taught: *“[A husband and wife] should be one in harmony, respect, and mutual consideration. Neither should plan or follow an independent course of action. They should*

consult, pray, and decide together. ... Remember that neither the wife nor the husband is the slave of the other. Husbands and wives are equal partners” (Ensign, Mar. 1978, 2, 4).

Consider how these relationships can act as positive or negative “switch points” in your life.

The purpose of the sacrament

1 Cor. 11:18-22 Many of the Saints in Corinth were not observing the purpose of the sacrament service. Instead of focusing on the sacrament ordinance, they were contending with each other and eating and drinking to excess.

1 Cor. 11:20 (footnote 20b provides the Joseph Smith Translation of this verse - *“Is it not to eat the Lord’s supper?”*). Here we are asked to consider the primary purpose of sacrament meeting.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland taught: *“With so very much at stake, [the sacrament] should be taken more seriously than it sometimes is. It should be a powerful, reverent, reflective moment. It should encourage spiritual feelings and impressions. As such it should not be rushed. It is not something to ‘get over’ so that the real purpose of a sacrament meeting can be pursued. This is the real purpose of the meeting”* (Ensign, Nov. 1995, 68).

1 Cor. 11:23-26; (also see Luke 22:19-20) According to Paul, the purposes of the sacrament are to remember the Lord’s sacrifice which was given for us. Consider individually how you can improve your ability to stay focused in your mind and heart on Jesus as you partake of the sacrament.

1 Cor. 11:27-29 Paul taught about the importance of partaking of the sacrament worthily—and warned those who partake of the sacrament unworthily. Examining our worthiness an important part of the sacrament and should be done each time we participate in the ordinance.

Consider how partaking of the sacrament has blessed you. And think about how you can make this ordinance more meaningful in your life. Ponder how your attitude toward the sacrament can be a “switch point” in your life.

The importance of all spiritual gifts

1 Cor. 14:2-14, 27-28 Paul’s letter suggests that the Saints in Corinth may have placed too much importance on the gift of tongues. In chapters 12-14, Paul explains that all the gifts of the Spirit are important, but that the Saints should seek gifts that will be for the benefit of all.

1 Cor. 12:7-11; D&C 46:11 Spiritual gifts are spiritual blessings or abilities, such as those listed in these verses, given through the Holy Ghost.

D&C 46:26 God gives spiritual gifts for the benefit of his children.

1 Cor. 12:8-10; Moro. 10:8-17, and D&C 46:13-25 As you consider these verses, think about the gifts of the Spirit you have personally experienced or observed and how those gifts have blessed you or others.

1 Cor. 12:12-25 Paul compared the members of the Church to different parts of the body to show that each member is important to the other members and to the Church as a whole. We can apply this comparison to the different gifts of the Spirit as we realize

that each gift is necessary and contributes to the progress of the Lord's work and the blessing of the Saints and their families.

1 Cor. 12:31; D&C 46:8 The scriptures counsel us to seek spiritual gifts

1 Cor. 14:12; D&C 46:9 Our reasons for seeking spiritual gifts should include the edifying of the Church. (To edify is to build up, instruct, improve, and enlighten.)

1 Cor. 13 Paul taught that charity is the greatest of all spiritual gifts. Carefully consider each of the fourteen (14) attributes of charity mentioned in verses 4-7, and ponder how you apply them in your life.

1 Cor. 13:1-3, 8-13 Paul teaches that charity is more important than any other spiritual gift. Ponder how you have been blessed by someone who has shown charity toward you.

Moro. 7:44-48 teaches that we can develop greater charity by sincere and fervent prayer to the Father that we may be filled with this love, and by acting as a true follower of Christ

Now take a moment to consider how charity can act as a "switch point" in your life.

The Resurrection and the degrees of glory

1 Cor. 15:12 Many of the Corinthians had begun to dispute the reality of the Resurrection.

1 Cor. 15:5-8 Witnesses of the Resurrection cited by Paul include Cephas—then of the twelve, over five hundred brethren, James the Apostle, and Paul himself.

2 Cor. 13:1 Paul cited many witnesses of the Resurrection to assure his listeners that this testimony was shared by many and could not be rightly disputed. Consider why witnesses of the Resurrection are important to you.

1 Cor. 15:20-23 Paul taught about the relationship between the Fall of Adam and the Resurrection—that by man came death and by Christ came the resurrection from death.

1 Cor. 15:29 Paul used the doctrine of baptism for the dead to teach that the ordinance of baptism for the dead would be meaningless without the Resurrection.

1 Cor. 15:35-44 Paul taught about the kingdoms of glory—stating that we are resurrected into different kingdoms of glory—celestial, terrestrial, or telestial. (See also D&C 88:27-32) Ponder carefully how your knowledge of the Resurrection and the kingdoms of glory influences the way you live.

Conclusion

It is vital that we follow the doctrines that will lead us back to our Father in Heaven. Examine your own life for *switch points*—attitudes and actions that, if followed, could change the direction of your life. Choose directions that will affect your life positively.

“Be Ye Reconciled to God”

Lesson 35 – 2 Corinthians

Introduction

If someone you trust handed you sand with the promise that it contained gold, what would you do?

Elder Henry B. Eyring spoke about receiving counsel from prophets: *“Don’t discard the counsel, but hold it close. If someone you trusted handed you what appeared to be nothing more than sand with the promise that it contained gold, you might wisely hold it in your hand awhile, shaking it gently. Every time I have done that with counsel from a prophet, after a time the gold flakes have begun to appear and I have been grateful”* (Ensign, May 1997, 26).

The book of 2nd Corinthians contains prophetic counsel that applies in our day. Paul’s teachings in this letter are similar to the teachings we often hear in general conference. Elder Eyring observed, *“When the words of prophets seem repetitive, that should rivet our attention [on them]”* (Ensign, May 1997, 25). Receive the counsel in this lesson and “hold it close.”

Overcoming tribulation

Paul’s letter to the Corinthians was written after a time of great persecution when Paul and Timothy *“despaired even of life”* (2 Cor. 1:8).

2 Cor. 1:3-5; 2 Cor. 4:5-15 Paul and Timothy were able to avoid despair despite being troubled, perplexed, persecuted, and cast down because they were comforted of God. Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are also our best sources for comfort.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell assured us that Jesus Christ will help us through our afflictions: *“When we take Jesus’ yoke upon us, this admits us eventually to what Paul called the ‘fellowship of [Christ’s] sufferings’ (Philip. 3:10). Whether illness or aloneness, injustice or rejection, ... our comparatively small-scale sufferings, if we are meek, will sink into the very marrow of the soul. We then better appreciate not only Jesus’ sufferings for us, but also His matchless character, moving us to greater adoration and even emulation. “Alma revealed that Jesus knows how to succor us in the midst of our griefs and sicknesses precisely because Jesus has already borne our griefs and sicknesses (see Alma 7:11-12). He knows them firsthand; thus His empathy is earned. Of course, we do not comprehend it fully any more than we understand how He bore all mortal sins, but His Atonement remains the rescuing and reassuring reality”* (Ensign, May 1997, 12).

Take a moment to consider how Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have helped you during adversity.

2 Cor. 1:4 Paul expressed a desire to help others receive the same comfort he had received from God. On a personal basis, think of how you can help others receive comfort from God.

2 Cor. 1:11 Paul thanked the Saints who had prayed for him and Timothy in their time of adversity. It is important for us to pray for each other and most of us can remember instances when the prayers of others have blessed us or someone we

know. In addition, we are blessed when we pray for others as our faith is strengthened.

2 Cor. 4:17-18 These teachings help us keep an eternal perspective during tribulation. (See also D&C 121:7-8.) It is helpful to see our trials from an eternal perspective because we can more easily see their true size and importance in the plan of salvation.

2 Cor. 6:4-5; 2 Cor. 11:23-33 Paul told the Corinthians of the trials that he and many of the Saints endured because of their belief in Jesus Christ.

2 Cor. 6:4, 6-7 Paul taught that we should develop the characteristics of patience, pureness, knowledge, longsuffering, kindness, reliance on the Holy Ghost, love, the word of truth, the power of God, and the armor of righteousness to help us endure trials.

2 Cor. 12:7 Paul said that the Lord gave him an infirmity—a *“thorn in the flesh”*—so that he might retain humility.

2 Cor. 12:8-10 Paul learned, when the Lord did not take away his *“thorn in the flesh”* as he had asked, that he could be strong by developing his reliance and faith in Christ.

Ether 12:27 Our weaknesses can help us receive strength from Jesus Christ. Ponder how you have seen the truth of Paul’s statement that *“when I am weak, then am I strong”*.

Forgiving others

2 Cor. 2:5-8 Paul admonished the Saints to forgive each other.

Matt. 6:14-15; 2 Cor. 2:7-8; D&C 64:9-10 These passages teach that it is important that we forgive others. Ponder how you are affected when you are forgiving and when you are unforgiving.

President Gordon B. Hinckley said: *“We see the need for [forgiveness] in the homes of the people, where tiny molehills of misunderstanding are fanned into mountains of argument. We see it among neighbors, where insignificant differences lead to undying bitterness. We see it in business associates who quarrel and refuse to compromise and forgive when, in most instances, if there were a willingness to sit down together and speak quietly one to another, the matter could be resolved to the blessing of all. Rather, they spend their days nurturing grudges and planning retribution. ...*

“If there be any who nurture in their hearts the poisonous brew of enmity toward another, I plead with you to ask the Lord for strength to forgive. This expression of desire will be of the very substance of your repentance. It may not be easy, and it may not come quickly. But if you will seek it with sincerity and cultivate it, it will come. ...

“... There is no peace in reflecting on the pain of old wounds. There is peace only in repentance and forgiveness. This is the sweet peace of the Christ, who said, ‘blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.’ (Matt. 5:9)” (“Of You It Is Required to Forgive,” *Ensign*, June 1991, 2, 5).

Think seriously about what you can do to become more forgiving.

Feeling godly sorrow for our sins

2 Cor. 7:8-9 After hearing that one of his epistles had “made [the Corinthians] sorry,” Paul rejoiced.

2 Cor. 7:9-10 Paul responded this way to the Corinthians’ sorrow because it motivated their repentance when they had “godly sorrow” for their sins. As we ponder the difference between godly sorrow and “the sorrow of the world” and why godly sorrow is an important part of repentance, we have this instruction...

President Spencer W. Kimball explained: *“If one is sorry only because someone found out about his sin, his repentance is not complete. Godly sorrow causes one to want to repent, even though he has not been caught by others, and makes him determined to do right no matter what happens. This kind of sorrow brings righteousness and will work toward forgiveness”* (*Repentance Brings Forgiveness* [pamphlet, 1984], 8).

Becoming reconciled to God

2 Cor. 5:20 Paul and Timothy counseled the Corinthians to “be reconciled to God”.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught what it means to be reconciled to God:

“Reconciliation is the process of ransoming man from his state of sin and spiritual darkness and of restoring him to a state of harmony and unity with Deity. ... Man, who was once carnal and evil, who lived after the manner of the flesh, becomes a new creature of the Holy Ghost; he is born again; and, even as a little child, he is alive in Christ” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965-73], 2:422-23).

2 Cor. 5:17-19, 21; 2 Nephi 25:23; Jacob 4:10-11 teach us how we can become reconciled to God.

Conclusion

Remember and follow Paul’s counsel in 2nd Corinthians.

“Beloved of God, Called to Be Saints”

Lesson 36 - Romans

Introduction

Read **Romans 3:10**. In this verse, Paul was not suggesting that no one ever does righteous acts; instead, he was pointing out that no one on earth is perfectly righteous. Christ was the only person who ever lived a completely sinless life. Everyone else has committed some sin (see also Romans 3:23).

When we have sinned, we must exercise faith in Christ and repent of our sins so we may receive the cleansing power of his Atonement to become clean again. Once we commit sin, we cannot become completely clean again on our own. This lesson will discuss how we can become clean through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, a process that Paul called *justification*.

We are justified by faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul had been writing to Church members in several areas who had returned to practicing the law of Moses, believing that strict observance of this law was necessary for salvation. Although the Saints in Rome were strong in the gospel (Romans 1:8), Paul wrote this epistle to emphasize that justification and salvation come through faith in Christ, not through the works of the law of Moses. In his letter, Paul tried to help the Roman Saints understand the doctrine of justification. To be justified means to be reconciled to God, pardoned from punishment for sin, and declared righteous and guiltless.

Romans 3:10-12, 23; see also Alma 7:21 We need to be justified because we have all offended God and become unclean through sin. Since no unclean thing can dwell with God, we must be justified in order to return to him.

Romans 3:24, 28; Romans 5:1-2; see also 2 Nephi 2:6 Paul taught about how we are justified—by the grace of Jesus Christ and our faith in him. Grace is divine help or strength. (See Bible Dictionary, “Grace,” 697.)

Romans 5:8-11; 2 Nephi 2:7-8 This divine help is made available to us through the Atonement of Christ.

Romans 3:20, 24, 28 Paul explained that justification comes through the grace of Jesus Christ, not through “*the deeds of the law*”.

Mosiah 2:20-21; Alma 22:14 We can’t earn justification and salvation exclusively through our works because we are always dependent upon the Lord for our very lives. Many people have interpreted Paul’s writings to mean that we can be justified through faith alone without good works.

Romans 3:31; James 2:14-18, 24; 2 Nephi 25:23; D&C 88:38-39 These passages help clarify the relationship between our actions (or works) and justification through the grace of Christ. The two are both necessary—grace does not negate the need for works and works cannot save us alone.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: “*To be justified before God we must love one another: we must overcome evil; we must visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and we must keep ourselves*

unspotted from the world: for such virtues flow from the great fountain of pure religion, strengthening our faith by adding every good quality that adorns the children of the blessed Jesus. We can pray in the season of prayer; we can love our neighbor as ourselves, and be faithful in tribulation, knowing that the reward of such is greater in the kingdom of heaven. What a consolation! What a joy!” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 76).

We can be reborn and become joint-heirs with Christ.

Romans 6:3-4; D&C 76:50-52 Paul compared baptism to death, burial, and resurrection. Baptism by immersion is a symbol of our spiritual rebirth. When we go under the water, it is a symbol that we are burying our old self in a grave. When we come out of the water, we are symbolically washed clean. We have become a new person who has covenanted to follow Christ.

Romans 6:4 Maintaining the cleanness and “*newness of life*” that we experienced at baptism may be accomplished by renewing our baptismal covenants as we partake of the sacrament each week, by repenting and seeking forgiveness from the Lord, and by beginning each day with a renewed determination to serve God.

Romans 8:5-6 teaches that the “*carnally minded*” are consumed by the things of the world.

Romans 8:6-8, 13 The consequence of being carnally minded is spiritual death. Consider how you can eliminate the carnal from your mind and heart. Also, try to remember how you have been blessed when you have chosen to be spiritually minded.

Romans 8:16 Paul testified “*that we are the children of God*”. Of course, each of us should be significantly affected by the knowledge that we are each a child of God. That relationship also implies a great deal about your capacities and potential.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks said: “*Consider the power of the idea taught in our beloved song ‘I Am a Child of God’ (Hymns, 301). ... Here is the answer to one of life’s great questions, ‘Who am I?’ I am a child of God with a spirit lineage to heavenly parents. That parentage defines our eternal potential. That powerful idea is a potent antidepressant. It can strengthen each of us to make righteous choices and to seek the best that is within us. Establish in the mind of a young person the powerful idea that he or she is a child of God, and you have given self-respect and motivation to move against the problems of life*” (Ensign, Nov. 1995, 25).

Romans 8:17 Paul gave a great promise to the children of God—that we will share glory with Christ.

D&C 76:50, 54-70 To be a joint-heir with Christ is to receive all that the Father has.

D&C 76:51-53 To receive this great inheritance, we must have a testimony of Christ, make and keep our baptismal covenants, merit and receive forgiveness through repentance, receive the Holy Ghost, overcome the world by faith, and be just and true.

Romans 8:18, 28, 31; see also Romans 5:3-5 Knowing that we are children of God and potential joint-heirs with Christ can help us endure the trials of this world because it can help us remember that the reward is far greater than the cost.

Romans 8:28 Consider how you have seen that “*all things work together for good to them that love God*”.

Romans 8:35-39 Paul taught in these verses that nothing can separate us from the love of Jesus Christ. Think seriously about how you have felt the Savior’s love in your life and what a difference his love has made in your life.

We should live as becomes Saints.

Romans 12:1 Paul exhorted the Roman Saints to present themselves as “*a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God*”.

3 Nephi 9:20; D&C 59:8 These passages help us see how we can present ourselves as living sacrifices to God just as **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained, “*To present [oneself] as a living sacrifice is to come forth with a broken heart and a contrite spirit through obedience*” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1966-73], 2:292).

Romans 12:2 Paul counseled the Roman Saints to “*be not conformed to this world*”. That counsel still applies today, warning us about trying to conform to the way of the world. We overcome this tendency by being led by the Spirit and being faithful to God.

Romans 12 and Romans 13 list many attributes of true Saints. Take your scriptures and identify these attributes. Then think about these attributes while considering these questions: Why is this attribute important to develop? What can I do this week to further develop this attribute?

Romans 12:19-21 Paul instructed us to treat our enemies well so that we might overcome evil with good.

Romans 13:8-9 Paul said that the commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves includes all other commandments.

Romans 13:10 This commandment includes all others as Paul explains here.

Romans 15:1-7 Paul taught us how members who are strong in the faith should respond to members who are weak in the faith.

Conclusion

It is through faith in Jesus Christ and righteous living that we can be justified—declared righteous and reconciled to God. We are children of God and have the potential to become joint-heirs with Christ if we have faith in him and live as he has commanded us.

Jesus Christ: “The Author and Finisher of Our Faith”

Lesson 37 - Hebrews

Introduction

Throughout his missionary journeys, Paul sought to convince the members of the Church that they should no longer practice the law of Moses. While the Jewish Christians had been taught that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ, many of them still believed that obedience to the law of Moses was essential to their salvation. Paul wrote the epistle to the Hebrews to reemphasize that the law of Moses had been fulfilled in Christ.

Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of Heavenly Father, is our Savior.

Hebrews 1 teaches the following about Jesus Christ:

- He created the world (verses 2, 10).
- He is in the image of God the Father (verse 3).
- He atoned for our sins (verse 3).
- He is the Firstborn Son of God the Father (verses 5-6).
- His glory and power are eternal and unchanging (verses 8, 12).

Paul said that the Son of God, who was “*made so much better than the angels*” (Heb. 1:4), had also been “*made a little lower than the angels*” (Heb. 2:9).

Mosiah 13:34-35 Jesus was “*made a little lower than the angels*” because He came to earth as a mortal and was subject to pain and death.

Heb. 2:9-10, 16-18; Heb. 4:15-16; see also Matt. 23:10-11 The mortal suffering was necessary for the perfecting of Christ, the salvation and exaltation of men, that Christ might be a merciful and faithful high priest for reconciling the sins of the people, that Christ might know temptation (yet without sin) so that he could succor those who are tempted, and provide grace and mercy.

Heb. 3:7-19; Heb. 4:1-11 Paul encouraged the Saints to live righteously so they could enter into God’s rest. He encouraged them not to follow the example of those who Moses led.

D&C 84:23-24; 3 Nephi 27:19 To enter into God’s rest is to obtain the fulness of his glory.

Heb. 3:7-11, 16-19; Heb. 4:1-2 Paul explained why some of the children of Israel in Moses’ time were unable to enter into God’s rest—because they hardened their hearts and were unbelieving.

Heb. 3:13-14; Heb. 4:11; Alma 13:12-13, 16 We can help each other become worthy to enter into God’s rest by encouraging each other to righteous service, laboring to help others, humbling ourselves, and bringing forth fruit meet for repentance.

The Melchizedek Priesthood is part of the fulness of the gospel.

Heb. 5:1-4 Paul taught that a man must receive and use priesthood authority by being called of God. A priesthood holder be “*called of God*” rather than “[*take*] *this honour unto himself*” because the authority of the priesthood is God’s and he alone has the right to decide who will receive it.

The priesthood authority that accompanied the law of Moses was the Aaronic Priesthood, also called the Levitical, lesser, or preparatory priesthood. (See D&C 84:25-27.)

Heb. 5:5-6; Heb. 6:20 The priesthood authority Jesus Christ holds is the Melchizedek Priesthood. When Jesus came and fulfilled the law of Moses, he also restored the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Heb. 7:11 This priesthood restoration was necessary because the Aaronic Priesthood does not have the authority to perform all the ordinances necessary for salvation.

“Neither the law of Moses nor the priesthood of Aaron which administered it was capable of bringing God’s children unto perfection. The Aaronic Priesthood is a lesser authority, and it administers the preparatory gospel only. The Melchizedek Priesthood, on the other hand, is the higher priesthood, commissioned to minister the gospel ordinances in their fulness and capable of purifying our lives so that we can again enter into the presence of the Lord” (The Life and Teachings of Jesus and His Apostles [Church Educational System manual, 1979], 385-86; see also D&C 107:18-20).

D&C 107:2-4 We call the greater priesthood the Melchizedek Priesthood “*out of... reverence to the name of the Supreme Being, to avoid the too frequent repetition of his name... ”*.

Members of the Church today are blessed by having the Melchizedek Priesthood as well as the Aaronic Priesthood so that ordinances of both salvation and exaltation can be provided to the children of Heavenly Father.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the new covenant between God and his children.

Paul reminded the members of the Church that worship under the law of Moses had pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Heb. 8:5 According to this scripture, the Lord told Moses to “*make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee*” while building the tabernacle to be used by the Israelites for worship.

The ceremonies in the tabernacle symbolized “heavenly things,” as outlined below.

Ordinance in the tabernacle:	What it symbolized:
a. The priests offered animals as sacrifices to God (Heb. 10:1-4, 11).	Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice for our sins (Heb. 9:26-28; Heb. 10:4-12).
b. The priests placed blood from the sacrificed animals on the altar to symbolize the cleansing and purification of the people (Heb. 9:6-7, 19-23).	Jesus’ blood, shed during the Atonement, cleanses and purifies us from sin (Heb. 9:11-15).
c. The high priest went through the veil into the Holy of Holies (Heb. 9:1-7).	Jesus, the great high priest, went through the veil into the heaven itself (Heb. 9:24).

Heb, 8:9; see also Gal. 3:24-25 Paul explained that the law of Moses was the old covenant between God and his people.

Heb. 8:6-8, 10-13 The new covenant brought by Jesus Christ is the fulness of the gospel. The old covenant is described in the Old Testament of the Bible, while the new covenant is described in the New Testament.

Heb. 10:1-4 The old covenant was unable to make its participants perfect because the sacrifices were not sufficient to take away sins since they were only shadows of the ultimate sacrifice.

Heb. 10:9-18 The new covenant gives us greater hope for perfection because that covenant is based in the sacrifice of Christ, who has the power to take away sins.

Those who exercise faith in Jesus Christ will inherit a place in the kingdom of God.

Heb. 10:19-22 After Paul explained the ways in which the fulness of the gospel is a higher, more complete law that replaces the law of Moses, he exhorted the Saints to follow this “*new and living way*” by putting their faith in Jesus Christ.

Articles of Faith 1:4 The first, or most basic, principle of the gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Heb. 11:1; Alma 32:21; Ether 12:6 These scriptures define faith as “*the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*”; “*if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true*”; and “*faith is things which are hoped for and not seen.*”

Faith is more than belief because faith is a motivating principle of action that compels you to follow Christ, while belief may be merely an intellectual assent that does not necessarily motivate you. Faith in Jesus Christ is essential to our salvation because it motivates us to do the works of Christ.

Heb. 11:4-12, 17-34 Here, Paul gave many examples of people who accomplished great things through faith in Jesus Christ. He mentioned Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sara, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, and others—and some of their actions that required faith.

Heb. 11:32-38 Paul also taught that faith can help us during times of adversity or opposition.

Consider how faith has helped you personally deal with adversity.

Conclusion

We are blessed to live in a time when the fulness of the gospel is available. Salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to his commandments. Keep the covenants and commandments of the restored gospel.

“Thou Hast Testified of Me”

Lesson 38 – Acts 21 - 28

Introduction

Is there a person in the scriptures with whom you feel you can identify, because of similar thoughts, experiences, or situations? Why do you feel a particular closeness to this person?

Looking back at his experiences after the First Vision, the Prophet Joseph Smith felt that his experiences were similar to the Apostle Paul's. Read Joseph Smith–History 1:23-25 to discover why.

The Apostle Paul's appearance before King Agrippa is one of the events covered in this lesson. In this situation and throughout his missionary journeys, despite rejection and persecution, Paul stood firm in the faith and courageously bore testimony of Jesus Christ. To appreciate how Paul fulfilled his life's mission to testify of Christ, turn to the entry under "Paul" in the Bible Dictionary (pages 742-43). Then, turn to the maps of Paul's journeys (maps 19-22 in the LDS edition of the King James Bible) and identify where each event took place. We would do well to follow Paul's example and be faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ even in the midst of trials and tribulation.

Paul reported on his journeys and faced an angry mob in Jerusalem.

After three successful missionary journeys that took him throughout the Roman Empire, Paul returned to Jerusalem, though he knew it was dangerous to do so.

Acts 21:10-12 Paul's friends tried to stop him from returning to Jerusalem because they feared that he would be taken prisoner by the Jews and turned over to the Gentiles.

Acts 21:13 Paul responded to his friends' concerns by saying that he was not only ready to be bound, but even to die for Christ. This demonstrates Paul's total commitment to Christ.

Acts 21:17-19 The day after he reached Jerusalem, Paul reported to the Church leaders on his mission. This is similar to what missionaries today do after returning from their missions—they report their mission experiences to the stake president and high council and often to ward or branch members in sacrament meeting. Many members have benefited with strengthened faith and commitment from hearing about others' missionary experiences.

Acts 15:1-35 Many Jewish Christians resented Paul for teaching that salvation came through Jesus Christ, not the law of Moses. To please these people, the brethren in Jerusalem asked Paul to go to the temple and undergo ritual cleansing as a sign that he still observed the law (Acts 21:20-25).

Acts 21:26-30 While Paul was in the temple he was seized by a mob of people who accused him of teaching against the law of Moses and polluting the temple by bringing a non-Jew into it.

Acts 21:31-36 Paul was rescued from this mob by the chief captain of the soldiers in Jerusalem.

Acts 21:37 – Acts 22 When the chief captain allowed him to speak to the people, Paul recounted his conversion story and told of a vision of Christ. Paul showed great courage in being a witness of Jesus Christ.

On a personal basis, think about a time when you have borne your testimony in a situation that required courage. How did you gain the courage to do this? Learning about Paul's actions can help us have more courage to share our testimonies with others as we see his example.

Paul was taken before the Sanhedrin.

Acts 22:22 The crowd outside the temple responded to Paul's account of his conversion by condemning him and calling for him to be killed.

Acts 22:24 The chief captain's purpose in removing Paul from the mob was to find out why the mob was so ready to kill him.

Acts 22:25-26 Paul was able to avoid being scourged when he pointed out that he was a Roman citizen. This gave him special rights and privileges in the Roman Empire, of which Jerusalem was a part.

Acts 23:1; see also Acts 24:16 The first thing Paul said when he was brought before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council, was that he had a good conscience before God. (See D&C 135:4 for a similar statement made by the Prophet Joseph Smith.) Paul's "*good conscience before God*" helped him at this time by giving him confidence that God was with him in his trials. Consider what changes you need to make in your life to have a "*good conscience before God*."

Acts 23:11 When the Lord appeared to Paul following Paul's examination by the Sanhedrin, he told him that he would also bear testimony in Rome just as he had done in Jerusalem. Ponder how the Lord has helped you "*be of good cheer*" during difficult times.

Acts 23:12-15 The day after the Lord appeared to Paul, more than 40 Jews plotted to kill Paul, vowing not to eat or drink until they succeeded.

Acts 23:16-35 Paul was protected from their plan when the chief captain sent him to Felix, the governor. This was the third time in just a few days that Paul was protected from death.

Paul testified to Agrippa, but his testimony was rejected.

From **Acts 24** we learn that Paul was sent to Felix, the governor, and testified boldly before him. Paul remained a prisoner for two years while Felix hoped to receive money to free him. When Felix was succeeded as governor by Festus, the Jews asked Festus to send Paul to Jerusalem for trial. Paul refused to go, knowing he would not get a fair trial there. Instead, Paul appealed to Caesar, as was his right as a Roman citizen. Festus agreed to send Paul to Rome, but Paul first had to appear before Herod Agrippa, the Roman-appointed ruler of Judea.

Acts 26:2-27 As you read Paul's words to King Agrippa, think about what impresses you about them.

Acts 26:28 Agrippa responded to Paul's words by saying that he was almost persuaded to be a Christian. Agrippa chose not to become a Christian. Consider the attitudes or other problems that keep people today from accepting the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Acts 26:24, 28 While Festus thought Paul was “mad”; Agrippa was almost persuaded by Paul. But neither was willing to accept and commit. Nothing less than complete devotion is acceptable to the Lord. Although Agrippa found Paul’s message almost believable while Festus rejected it outright, both failed the test of faith Paul offered them.

Paul was shipwrecked on his way to Rome.

Agrippa had been willing to release Paul (**Acts 26:32**), but Paul had appealed to Caesar and so was sent to Rome. Paul’s journey to Rome can be traced on your LDS maps through such sites as Fair Havens, where Paul counseled the men to remain for the winter, and Malta (Melita), where the shipwrecked passengers swam ashore.

Acts 27:7-20 When the master of the ship rejected Paul’s warning that it was too dangerous to sail from Fair Havens, they sailed into a tempestuous storm.

Acts 27:11-12 The centurion chose to disregard Paul’s counsel and instead accepted the word of the owner of the ship. Some of us occasionally disregard our Church leaders’ counsel and suffer the consequences thereof at some point in our lives.

Acts 27:21-26 Paul knew that all of the passengers would arrive on land safely, though the ship would be destroyed in the storm, because an angel revealed it to him.

Acts 27:27-44 This prophecy was fulfilled as the ship ran aground and broke up, but without any of the occupants losing their life.

Acts 28:7-9 Paul used his priesthood power while on the island of Melita to heal the father of the chief of the island.

This incident suggests that one purpose of priesthood power is to serve as a witness of the Lord’s servants. Honoring the priesthood helps us serve as witnesses of Christ to those around us.

After several months, Paul finally reached Rome, where he was again imprisoned.

Acts 28:16-31 Paul turned this seeming setback to his advantage as he was given relative freedom, so he spent his time teaching the gospel and testifying of Christ.

Conclusion

Historians assume that Paul died a martyr’s death in Rome about A.D. 65. Throughout his life, he fulfilled his responsibility as an Apostle to *“go ye therefore, and teach all nations”* (Matt. 28:19). He also fulfilled the Lord’s prophecy that he would preach the gospel *“before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel”* (Acts 9:15). He was a faithful witness of Christ despite verbal and physical attacks, unjust imprisonment, and natural disasters. When we follow Paul’s example by being faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ in all situations, He will give us the strength to endure our trials.

“For the Perfecting of the Saints”

Lesson 39 - Ephesians

Introduction

What do a thread and a rope have in common? Well, both are made of fibers or strands of material. How are they different? The thread is a single strand, while the rope is made of many strands woven together. So which of these objects is stronger?

Obviously, the rope.

Like the piece of thread, we are weak when we depend on ourselves. However, like the rope, we can be stronger when we are united with others in faith and righteousness. In his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul emphasized the importance of *“perfecting ... the saints”* and reaching a *“unity of the faith”* (Eph. 4:12-13). This lesson discusses how, as families and as a Church, we can work toward perfection and unity by trusting in the Savior, following the apostles and prophets, developing strong families, and putting on the whole armor of God. The process of *“perfecting ... the saints”* (Ephesians 4:12) requires us to increase our faith in Christ, follow the teachings of the apostles and prophets, and protect ourselves from the wickedness of the world.

The dispensation of the fulness of times

Eph. 1:10 In the first chapter of Ephesians, Paul spoke of *“the dispensation of the fulness of times”*. A dispensation of the gospel is a period of time when the Lord has at least one servant on the earth who holds the keys of the priesthood and is authorized to administer the gospel. (See Bible Dictionary, “Dispensations,” 657-58.) The dispensation of the fulness of times is the dispensation that began with the restoration of the gospel and organization of the Church through Joseph Smith.

President Gordon B. Hinckley commented on why our dispensation is referred to as the fulness of times: *“You and I are experiencing the profound and wonderful blessings of the dispensation of the fulness of times. In this day and time there have been restored to the earth all of the principles, powers, blessings, and keys of all previous dispensations”* (Ensign, May 1992, 70).

Eph. 1:9-10 Paul said our Father in Heaven would *“gather together in one all things in Christ”* in this dispensation. Think about what that means and you will realize that some things that are being gathered together in our day include the scriptures, Church members, records of the dead, and families that are sealed in the temple. We help in this gathering process by proclaiming the gospel, helping to perfect the saints, and participating in the work of redeeming the dead.

Jesus Christ as our cornerstone

Compare **Eph. 2:12** and **Eph. 2:19**. In these two verses, Paul described the changes that took place in those who had accepted and followed the Savior. Consider how you have seen these same changes in yourself or others and how your association with other Church members as *“fellow citizens”* in the gospel has blessed your life

Eph. 2:20 Paul taught that Jesus Christ is the “*chief corner stone*” of the Church. A cornerstone is a foundation stone placed at a corner where two walls meet. The cornerstone is essential for the strength and unity of the structure. Jesus Christ has been the cornerstone of our faith as he has strengthened us and taught us how to become united in the gospel.

Eph. 2:20 and Eph. 4:11-14 Paul taught about the importance of apostles and prophets as the foundation of the Church along with Christ. Living apostles and prophets are essential to the true Church for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the instruction and improvement of the Church membership and organization, and providing truth. One teaching from latter-day apostles and prophets that helps us progress toward perfection and unity is the Proclamation on the Family. Others are found in the *Ensign* magazine and prophet’s teachings.

President Boyd K. Packer taught: “*The ministry of the prophets and apostles leads them ever and always to the home and the family. ... The ultimate purpose of all we teach is to unite parents and children in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they are happy at home, sealed in an eternal marriage, linked to their generations, and assured of exaltation in the presence of our Heavenly Father*” (*Ensign*, May 1995, 8).

Eph. 4:5 Paul taught that there is “*one Lord, one faith, one baptism*”, meaning that we need to be unified in a knowledge of gospel truth. It is important that we be unified in our understanding and teaching of the basic doctrines of the Church to have one Lord and one faith and one common covenant of baptism.

Unity between husband and wife and between parents and children

Eph. 5:22-29 Paul used a comparison of marriage and Christ’s devotion to the Church when he described the relationship between husband and wife. Husbands and wives can learn from this comparison to help them develop greater love and unity in their marriage. Think of specific ways Jesus has shown his love for the Church and how each way can be applied to marriage.

President Spencer W. Kimball taught: “*Can you find in all the holy scriptures where the Lord Jesus Christ ever failed his church? ... Was he faithful? Was he true? Is there anything good and worthy that he did not give? Then that is what we ask—what he asks of a husband. ...*

“*... Can you think of how he loved the Church? Its every breath was important to him. Its every growth, its every individual, was precious to him. He gave to those people all his energy, all his power, all his interest. He gave his life—what more could one give?*” (*Men of Example* [address delivered to religious educators, 12 Sept. 1975], 4-5).

Eph. 6:1-3 Paul counseled children to honor and obey their parents. This counsel is more important than ever in today’s world.

Eph. 6:4 Paul counseled parents to bring up a child in “*the nurture and admonition of the Lord*”. Parents nurture children spiritually by teaching them the gospel principles of faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost among other important teachings. Loving parents can follow the Lord’s example when admonishing children by doing so in love and patience.

Paul’s counsel to parents and children helps strengthen family relationships and maintain unity in the home when it is applied. Latter-day apostles and prophets have given us counsel regarding families in general conferences, in other meetings or firesides, and in Church magazine articles.

In “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” **the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles** taught that *“happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities”* (Ensign, Nov. 1995, 102).

Putting on “the new man” and “the whole armour of God”

Eph. 4:24 Paul encouraged the Ephesians to *“put on the new man”* and become a true follower of Christ by changing the natural man to one who abhors and avoids all sins.

Eph. 4:21-32 Some characteristics of people who have become *“new”* through the Atonement of Jesus Christ include telling the truth, avoiding anger toward others, laboring honestly and diligently, using uplifting and holy language, avoiding evil and malice, and being kind and tenderhearted, forgiving and loving to one another.

Eph. 6:10-12 While exhorting the Saints to put on the armor of God, Paul warned them against many kinds of evil influences. We all know of the evil influences in this life that must be opposed and avoided.

Eph. 6:13-18; D&C 27:15-18 The different pieces of what Paul calls the armor of God include loins girt about with truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the shield of faith. Review these verses carefully and think about what each piece represents. Each piece of the armor of God is intended to protect us against the influence of Satan. We must put on this armor each day.

Conclusion

The Lord established his Church, with apostles and prophets, to help us become like him and return to live with him. We need to strive together for the *“perfecting of the Saints”* by following Paul’s teachings in Ephesians.

“I Can Do All Things through Christ”
Lesson 40 – Philippians, Colossians, Philemon

Introduction

True, honest, virtuous, and praiseworthy... Which article of faith contains these words? The thirteenth article of faith. Read it and then look closely again at the first half of the article of faith, at the phrase “*the admonition of Paul.*” What is “*the admonition of Paul*” and where is it found? Turn to **Philippians 4:8** and compare it to the thirteenth article of faith. When Joseph Smith mentioned the admonition of Paul in the thirteenth article of faith, he was referring to Philippians 4:8, which is part of a letter that Paul wrote to the Saints in Philippi. Today’s lesson will cover this letter and Paul’s letters to the Colossians and to Philemon, all of which were written during Paul’s imprisonment in Rome. These letters discuss attributes we should seek to develop as faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

Paul encouraged the Philippian Saints to follow Jesus Christ.

Philip. 1:12-18 Paul was imprisoned in Rome when he wrote to the Philippians. Other members of the Church reacted to Paul’s imprisonment by taking up the opportunity to proclaim Christ. Some members today are helped by seeing or hearing about others who are courageous in serving the Lord.

Philip. 2:2-3 Paul exhorted the Church members to be united and avoid pride and division.

Philip. 1:27; Philip. 2:14-15 Paul taught that Church members should be “*of one mind*” in striving to spread the gospel of Christ and he counseled them to “*shine as lights in the world.*” Sometimes individuals do things for “*vainglory*”, but Paul counseled against this because it is not a Christlike motivation.

D&C 38:24-26 It is important that we not think we are better than other people because we are all the children of our Heavenly Father and are equal in our potential to become like him.

Philip. 2:5-8 Paul taught about Jesus’ humility.

John 8:29 Jesus set the perfect example of being humble and submissive to the will of his Father, saying that all he did was to please his Father. Ponder how you can become more humble and submissive to Heavenly Father’s will in your personal life.

Philip. 2:12 Paul told the Philippians, “*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*”. His meaning is explained by Pres. McKay...

President David O. McKay explained: “*‘Work out your own salvation’ is an exhortation to demonstrate by activity, by thoughtful, obedient effort the reality of faith. But this must be done with a consciousness that absolute dependence upon self may produce pride and weakness that will bring failure. With ‘fear and trembling’ we should seek the strength and grace of God for inspiration to obtain the final victory*” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1957, 7).

Philip. 3:1; Philip. 4:4 Paul repeatedly counseled the Philippians to “*rejoice in the Lord*”. Think about how that counsel applies to you today—do you *rejoice* in the Lord?

Philip. 3:7-8 Paul told the Philippians that he had sacrificed all things for Christ. Paul had sacrificed his own concerns and worldly desires to be a servant of Christ.

Philip. 3:9-12 It is important that we make sacrifices for Christ so that we can know him better and understand the power of his atonement.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “*A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for, from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things*” (Lectures on Faith [1985], 69).

Philip. 4:6-7 We can obtain the “*peace of God*” mentioned in **Philip. 4:7**. To do so, we must devote our lives to serving the Lord as Paul did.

Philip. 4:8 (See also **Articles of Faith 1:13**) We apply Paul’s counsel in this verse as we turn our attention from worldly things to that which benefits us spiritually.

Philip. 4:13 Paul testified, “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*”. Of course, Paul gained this testimony of Christ by following the Master and serving him with full intent. Consider how you have seen that you can “do all things through Christ” as you have served in your calling, rendered compassionate service, or participated in missionary service. Weren’t your abilities increased and your talents magnified as you served?

Paul reminded the Colossians that redemption comes only through Christ.

Col. 1:23; see also **Col. 2:5-7** The Saints in Colosse, a small city east of Ephesus, were being influenced by teachings that minimized the importance of the Savior and focused on attaining perfection by observing ordinances and worshiping angels. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul warned against these teachings, exhorting the Saints to continue to be “*grounded and settled*” in the knowledge that redemption comes only through Jesus Christ.

Col. 2:12-22 Paul taught the Colossians truths about Jesus Christ including their part in his resurrection and the forgiveness he extends. It was important for the Colossians to understand these truths to have a testimony of Jesus Christ that would affect the way they lived.

Col. 1:12; 2 Nephi 9:18; D&C 50:5 The “*inheritance of the saints*” that we may receive from our Father in Heaven is eternal life with him.

Col. 1:12-14 Christ makes this inheritance possible through his atonement.

Col. 1:10-12; 2 Nephi 9:18; Alma 5:51; D&C 50:5 To receive this inheritance, we must walk in worthiness, be faithful in good works, increase in our knowledge of God, believe in Christ, endure the crosses of the world, repent, and endure to the end.

Col. 1:23 Paul exhorted the Colossians to be “*grounded and settled*” in the gospel, meaning that they should be faithful to all of the basic principles of the gospel and have their faith founded in Christ.

Col. 1:23 Various reasons or excuses cause some people to be “*moved away from the hope of the gospel*”. To avoid that we need to strengthen our testimonies through study, pondering, prayer, and active service in the gospel.

Paul taught the Colossians what they should do as the elect of God.

Col. 2:2-3 Paul wanted the Saints to have their hearts “*knit together in love*” and in the knowledge of God the Father and Jesus Christ. One way that we can accomplish this in our own ward or branch is to bear our testimony—verbally and through loving service.

Col. 2:7 To be “*rooted and built up*” in Christ is to have a strong testimony of his divine nature and to follow his example of righteousness and devotion to Heavenly Father. Being “*rooted and built up*” in Christ helps us in times of trial because we have something to hang on to that can truly support us during even the most difficult times.

Col. 3:12-15 Attributes of “*the elect of God*” listed include mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, forgiveness, charity, peacefulness, and gratitude.

Col. 3:16-17; see also **D&C 1:37**; **D&C 18:34-36** We let the word of Christ dwell in us, as Paul admonished, when we strengthen each other in testimony and through Christlike service.

Hymns also strengthen our understanding and testimony of the word of Christ.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks said: “*We need to make more use of our hymns to put us in tune with the Spirit of the Lord, to unify us, and to help us teach and learn our doctrine. We need to make better use of our hymns in missionary teaching, in gospel classes, in quorum meetings, in home evenings, and in home teaching visits. Music is an effective way to worship our Heavenly Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. We should use hymns when we need spiritual strength and inspiration*” (Ensign, Nov. 1994, 12).

Col. 2:7; **Col. 3:15, 17** Paul repeatedly emphasized the importance of being thankful. We need to show gratitude to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in all circumstances.

Paul encouraged Philemon to be forgiving toward Onesimus.

Paul wrote a personal letter to Philemon, a member of the Church in Colosse, regarding Philemon’s slave Onesimus, who had robbed Philemon and run away to Rome, where he met Paul and was converted to the Church. Paul asked Philemon to forgive Onesimus and accept him as a brother in the gospel.

Philem. 1:16 We learn from this epistle about the gospel’s power to transform human relationships.

Conclusion

Consider the importance of developing attributes that help us become more like Jesus Christ, such as those mentioned in Paul’s letters to the Philippians, the Colossians, and Philemon. Read **Philip. 4:8** and **Col. 3:12-15** and choose one attribute from those verses to work on developing this week.

“I Have Finished My Course”

Lesson 41 – 1 Timothy; 2 Timothy; Titus

Introduction

What was the last race you competed in or watched? What is the difference between *winning* and *finishing* a competitive race? How many winners are there in a typical race? What do you have to do to win?

Now, think about how the course of our life is like a race. Then, think about how it differs from a race—one way being that everyone can win the “*race*” of life.

Finally, think about what we must do to finish the race of life successfully. Note that a “*race*” could also be called a “*course*.”

Read **2 Timothy 4:7**. The Apostle Paul lived in such a way that he could make this declaration toward the end of his life. This lesson discusses several of Paul’s teachings that will help us as we strive to finish our course successfully. One of our challenges in this life is to learn and teach true doctrine and be righteous examples for others.

Background

Timothy and Titus were trusted associates of Paul who assisted him in preaching the gospel. After Paul’s first Roman imprisonment, he resumed his missionary travels. In Ephesus he left Timothy to minister to the Church, and in Crete he left Titus with a similar assignment. As Paul continued his journey, he wrote letters to strengthen these brethren and to counsel them in their responsibilities as pastors or shepherds over the Saints. Hence these letters are often called the *pastoral epistles*.

Learn and teach true doctrine.

1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-7, 13; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; Titus 1:10-11 Signs of apostasy Paul described in his letters to Timothy and Titus include departing from the faith; giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; lies and hypocrisy; forbidding marriage; commanding abstinence from meats; egotism, covetousness, pride and boasting, blasphemy, disobedience to parents, ingratitude, and evil, and a host of other such actions and attitudes.

2 Nephi 28:3-9; D&C 1:15-16 Signs of apostasy listed in these verses—denying the power of God, saying there is no God today, preaching that God will easily forgive willful sins, etc.—are evident today.

2 Tim. 3:7 Some people are “*ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*”. We can ensure that our learning brings us to a knowledge of the truth by including a thorough study of the gospel in our learning and learning through the Spirit.

1 Tim. 4:6-7, 13-16; 2 Tim. 2:16, 23-25; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Tim. 4:2, 5 Paul taught Timothy about the responsibilities of people who teach the gospel—to

assure that they teach truth and good doctrine; that they study, teach and exhort; that they shun vain babblings, etc.

Our opportunities to teach the gospel include teaching family members, fulfilling callings in the Church, and discussing the gospel with friends and acquaintances. Each of us is in some way a teacher of the gospel.

1 Tim. 1:3; 1 Tim. 4:6, 13; Titus 2:1 Paul emphasized the importance of teaching and learning true doctrine. True doctrine helps us guard against apostasy. Speaking of the power of true doctrine, **Elder Boyd K. Packer** said:

“True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior. The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior. ... That is why we stress so forcefully the study of the doctrines of the gospel” (Ensign, Nov. 1986, 17).

Mosiah 18:19-20; D&C 52:9 We can be sure that what we teach is true doctrine if it is the doctrine taught by the prophets and if we concentrate on teaching faith and repentance.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin counseled: *“God has revealed everything necessary for our salvation. We should teach and dwell on the things that have been revealed and avoid delving into so-called mysteries. My counsel to teachers in the Church, whether they instruct in wards and stakes, Church institutions of higher learning, institutes of religion, seminaries, or even as parents in their homes, is to base their teachings on the scriptures and the words of latter-day prophets”* (Ensign, Nov. 1994, 77).

2 Tim. 1:13; Titus 1:9 Paul counseled us to hold fast once we have received sound doctrine.

1 Nephi 15:23-24 Nephi exhorts us to “hold fast” to the word of God.

“Be ... an example of the believers.”

1 Tim. 4:12 Paul counsels us to be *“an example of the believers”*. The following are ways Paul admonished Timothy to be an example. Consider how each of us can be an example in each of these ways. 1) Word, 2) Conversation (may also mean conduct or behavior), 3) Charity, 4) Spirit, 5) Faith, and 6) Purity

“Follow after righteousness” and deny ungodliness.

1 Tim. 6:7-10 Paul taught that the love of money is the *“root of all evil”*. The search for worldly wealth has distracted many in all dispensations from pursuing their love for the things of God.

1 Tim. 6:17-19; Jacob 2:18-19 We ensure that we do not focus too much on money and other material wealth by doing good works, clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, etc.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught: *“There is nothing inherently evil about money. The Good Samaritan used the same coinage to serve his fellowman that Judas used to betray the Master. It is ‘the love of money [which] is the root of all evil.’ (1 Tim. 6:10; italics added.) The critical difference is the degree of spirituality we exercise in viewing, evaluating, and managing the things of this world”* (Ensign, Nov. 1985, 63).

In his letters to Timothy and Titus, Paul gave many instructions about living righteously.

1 Tim. 6:11-12; 2 Tim. 2:22; Titus 2:1-8, 12; Titus 3:1-2, 8 Paul counseled us to follow after attributes of righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness, charity, peace, purity of heart, soberness, gravity, temperance, discretion, chastity, gentleness, and being law-abiding.

Conclusion

Paul knew he would soon be martyred for his testimony of Jesus Christ. But he also knew that because he had lived the gospel, *“there [was] laid up for [him] a crown of righteousness”* (2 Tim. 4:8). It is vitally important that we do the right things every day and stay on course so we can say with Paul, *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”* (2 Tim. 4:7).

Additional teachings of Paul in these books

1 Tim. 2:1-3 Paul counseled about prayer—praying for all people, including leaders of nations.

1 Tim. 3:1-7 Paul set forth the qualifications of a bishop.

1 Tim. 5:8 Paul taught about caring for our families and spoke strongly against those who do not fulfill this responsibility.

2 Tim. 1:7 *“God hath not given us the spirit of fear”*

People have many fears in the world today, but Paul counseled us to overcome fear with confidence and love as we live righteously.

Titus 2:9-10 Paul’s counsel to servants in these verses applies to employees. (*Purloining* means stealing or misappropriating.) Employees sometimes steal from their employers by embezzling, taking supplies for personal use, or not giving a full day’s work. Paul said that, instead of purloining, we should show “good fidelity,” or be faithful and trustworthy.

“Pure Religion”

Lesson 42 – James

Introduction

What does the word *pure* mean? You may answer that pure means real, genuine, complete, and perfect. What does *religion* mean? You may define it as the service and worship of God, a system of beliefs and practices, and a commitment or devotion to a particular way of life. Now, how would you define “pure religion”? Turn to and read James 1:27. This lesson discusses how we can apply James’s teachings to help us live a “*pure religion*” and be “*undefiled before God.*”

The writer of the book of James is generally thought to be the brother of Jesus Christ. After Jesus was resurrected, James served as an Apostle and was an important leader in the early Church (Acts 12:17; Acts 15:13-20).

We should endure affliction patiently.

James 1:2-3 James taught that we learn patience from facing trials of our faith. (See footnote 2a, which shows that in the Joseph Smith Translation, the phrase *divers temptations* is changed to *many afflictions.*)

James 1:4; Romans 5:3-5; Alma 36:3 We are blessed with increased patience, valuable experience, hope, the love of God, and being lifted up at the last day when we endure afflictions patiently.

Elder Orson F. Whitney wrote: “*No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to 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*” (quoted in Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* [1972], 98).

James 5:10-11 James mentioned the prophets as good examples of patience in affliction. Think about how latter-day prophets have demonstrated this patience and set an example for us.

We should pray to God in faith.

James 1:5-6 James counseled those who “*lack wisdom*” to pray in faith with no doubts about God’s ability to give them answers and counsel. As promised, Heavenly Father will give liberally if we ask in faith. Ponder personal experiences you have had with receiving answers to prayer.

Joseph Smith—History 1:11-13 gives us insight into how the Prophet Joseph Smith was influenced by the counsel in James 1:5. We learn the truth of James’ counsel from the Prophet’s experience.

Joseph Smith—History 1:14-20 Obviously, Joseph’s decision to follow the counsel in James 1:5 affected us as Pres. Kimball points out...

President Spencer W. Kimball said: “*Because the fourteen-year-old boy went out in the woods to pray, having read in the scriptures, ... because he did live the revelations from on high, we have The*

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We have all of the blessings that can make us the happiest people in the whole world, because a boy of fourteen went out into the woods to pray” (in Conference Report, Melbourne Australia Area Conference 1976, 23).

Asking of God in faith and receiving wisdom are not limited by age or other circumstances. Joseph Smith was 14 years old when he put James’s words to the test and received the First Vision. He was 17 years old when the angel Moroni visited him and revealed where the golden plates were being safeguarded.

James 1:6-7 James described those who pray without faith as being like changeable waves driven by capricious winds and tossed. Ponder what you can do to strengthen your faith.

James 4:8 James taught, “*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you*”. Sincere prayers bring us closer to God as we humble ourselves and sincerely seek guidance.

We should control our tongues and be “*slow to wrath.*”

James 1:19 James taught that we should be “*swift to hear, slow to speak*”. Have experiences in your life have confirmed the wisdom of this counsel? Ponder how you can become a better listener and a more thoughtful speaker.

James 1:19 James also taught we should be “*slow to wrath*”. Consequences of speaking or acting in anger include false accusations, hard feelings, damaged relationships, and serious errors in judgments. Ponder the experiences in your life that have confirmed the wisdom of James’s counsel and think about how you can overcome or control feelings of anger.

James 1:26 James taught that we should bridle our tongues. The purpose of a horse’s bridle is to guide and control the horse. We can apply James’s counsel to “bridle” our tongues (See James 4:11) by avoiding gossiping, lies, quarreling, swearing, and angry words. Instead, we should use our tongues to speak kind words, to speak truth, to pray, and to make peace.

James 3:3-5 James compared the tongue to the bit on a horse’s bridle and the helm of a ship. The bit is the steel part of the bridle that is inserted into the horse’s mouth. We learn from these comparisons that the tongue can have a significant effect on our temporal and spiritual lives. Learning to control our words can help us control other aspects of our lives.

James 3:9-13 James taught in these verses that controlling our speech is important because we cannot be examples of Christlike behavior if we alternately bless God and curse men—such behavior is the pattern of hypocrites, not true saints.

James 3:16-18 Controlling our tongues helps lead to peace by avoiding or overcoming envy and strife and providing wisdom, mercy, and gentle counsel. Controlling our tongues is another important part of pure religion.

We should be “*doers of the word,*” showing our faith by our works.

James 1:22 James counseled us not to be just “*hearers only.*”

James 1:22-25; James 4:17 Being “*hearers only*” of the word results in deceiving yourself unless you add Christlike action to put what you heard into practice. The result of being “*doers of the word*” includes being blessed in our deeds.

James 2:14-26 James taught about the relationship between faith and works. Faith is dead without works because, as James states, it profits no one to express faith that a need will be met and then do nothing to help resolve the problem through our personal effort. Good works strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ by helping us draw closer to the Spirit.

James 1:27 James emphasized that we should live a pure religion by visiting and helping people in need.

James 1:27; see D&C 59:9 Consider what you should do to stay “*unspotted from the world*”. As counseled in these verses, attending church and partaking of the sacrament each week helps us stay unspotted from the world.

Conclusion

James’s teachings are true. We can live our religion more purely by being patient in affliction, praying to God in faith, mastering ourselves, and doing good works.

Additional teachings in James

In the **Joseph Smith Translation of James 1:12**, the word *endureth* is changed to *resisteth* (see footnote 12b). There is a difference between enduring temptation and resisting temptation.

James 1:12; James 4:7 Promises to those who resist temptation include the “*crown of life*” and the promise that the devil will “*flee from you*”.

James 2:1-9 James taught us not to judge others by their earthly positions or material possessions but rather by their faith and works.

1 Samuel 16:7; D&C 38:24-27 We look beyond the outward appearance and into people’s hearts, as God does when we treat them as we ourselves would want to be treated.

James 3:16; James 4:1-6 James taught that the effects of envy and lust are strife, confusion, war, and loss of spirituality and godliness.

James 4:7-10 We overcome feelings of envy or lust through humbling ourselves before God.

James 5:14-15 James gave counsel about administering to the sick through the priesthood.

“A Chosen Generation”

Lesson 43 – 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and Jude

Introduction

The following story was told by Bishop Vaughn J. Featherstone. *“Many years ago I heard the story of the son of King Louis XVI of France. King Louis had been taken from his throne and imprisoned. His young son, the prince, was taken by those who dethroned the king. They thought that inasmuch as the king’s son was heir to the throne, if they could destroy him morally, he would never realize the great and grand destiny that life had bestowed upon him.”* *“They took him to a community far away, and there they exposed the lad to every filthy and vile thing that life could offer. ... For over six months he had this treatment—but not once did the young lad buckle under pressure. Finally, after intensive temptation, they questioned him. Why had he not submitted himself to these things—why had he not partaken? These things would provide pleasure, satisfy his lusts, and were desirable; they were all his. The boy said, ‘I cannot do what you ask for I was born to be a king’ ”* (“The King’s Son,” *New Era*, Nov. 1975, 35).

Bishop Featherstone commented: *“Our Father is a king, and just as the king’s son was exposed to every vile and perverted thing in this life, so you will be exposed to much of the filth and degradation of our generation. But you... are also born to be kings and queens, priests and priestesses”* (*New Era*, Nov. 1975, 35).

As spirit children of our Heavenly Father, we have divine potential. The knowledge of our divine potential should significantly influence the way we live. As children of our Father in Heaven, we can become like him and inherit all that he has. The epistles of Peter and Jude offer valuable teachings to help us live worthily as children of God.

Live in faith and holiness as a chosen generation.

1 Peter 1:3-4, 18-21 Peter taught in chapter 1 that the mission of Jesus Christ was to redeem man, be an undefiled and incorruptible sacrifice, and give man hope of an inheritance in heaven.

1 Peter 1:8, 13-16, 22-23; 1 Peter 2:5 Knowing of the Savior’s mission and sacrifice should affect our daily actions, causing us to love God, be sober and hopeful, be obedient and holy, purify ourselves, follow the Spirit, love one another with a pure heart, be born again by the word of God, and offer acceptable sacrifices to God through worship of the Savior.

1 Peter 1:7; Hebrews 11:6; 1 Nephi 7:12 Faith is *“much more precious than ... gold,”* as Peter stated, because it does not perish, brings rewards from God, and allows the Lord to do all things for our benefit.

1 Peter 1:5, 9 To have our faith tried with fire means to try it under severe conditions and to have our faith purified by a refiner’s fire. The ultimate purpose of our faith is our salvation through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:10 (see also verse 11) Peter taught that the prophets who testify of Jesus Christ have *“enquired and searched diligently”*. Diligent prayer and scripture study strengthen our testimonies of the Savior as we read of his example, understand his teachings, and seek his counsel.

1 Peter 2:9-10 (and see the quotation below.) Peter spoke of a chosen generation.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie defined a chosen generation as *“not those living in a particular period or age, but ... the house of Israel both anciently, in the meridian of time, and now in these latter-*

days. ... [It includes] faithful members of the Church who have taken upon themselves the name of Christ and been adopted into his family” (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 3 vols. [1966-73], 3:294).

1 Peter 2:9 Our responsibility as a chosen generation is to further the work of the Father and Son by spreading the gospel, administering the priesthood for the blessing of his children, and helping the Lord redeem his people.

Matt. 5:16 We fulfill this responsibility by doing good works in the name of our Redeemer and being examples of Christlike behavior and attitudes.

Follow the Savior’s example in enduring trials and persecution.

Peter wrote, “Christ ... suffered for us, leaving us an example” (**1 Peter 2:21**).

1 Peter 2:19-23 We can follow the Savior’s example in responding to trials and persecution by being patient, faithful, and forgiving. We have examples of people who were Christlike in enduring trials such as the Prophet Joseph Smith and many the early saints of this dispensation, as well as current members.

1 Peter 3:13-17; 1 Peter 4:12-19 Peter counseled us on how to respond in such circumstances—by being happy, maintaining our faith, and realizing that those trials will be for our good.

Partake of the divine nature and strive to make your calling and election sure.

2 Peter 1:4-7 Attributes Peter describes as part of divine nature include faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity.

2 Peter 1:8 It is important that we develop these qualities to assure that we are fruitful in our knowledge of our Savior.

Peter exhorted the Saints to “give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (**2 Peter 1:10**). To make your calling and election sure is to receive from the Lord the assurance or promise of exaltation in the celestial kingdom. A person whose calling and election is made sure knows that he or she is “sealed up unto eternal life, by revelation and the spirit of prophecy” [D&C 131:5]. Joseph Smith received this promise from the Lord, as recorded in Doctrine and Covenants D&C 132:49.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught what we must do to have our calling and election made sure: “After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost (by the laying on of hands), ... then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God, and the Lord will soon say unto him, Son, thou shalt be exalted. When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve Him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling and his election made sure” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 150).

Resist false teachers and those who deny the Second Coming.

Jude was a son of Joseph and Mary and a brother of Jesus.

Peter and Jude warned that there would be false teachers among the members of the Church.

2 Peter 2:1-3, 10, 12-19; Jude 1:4, 8, 10-13, 16, 18-19 Some characteristics of false teachers that were mentioned include teaching heresy, denying the Lord, displaying covetousness, exhibiting lust, despising government, being presumptuous, being arrogant, disrespectful of dignities, speaking evil, being corrupt, and having eyes full of adultery, etc. We can recognize false teachers today by the same fruits.

2 Peter 3:11-14, 17-18; Jude 1:3, 20-21; see also Moro. 7:12-17; D&C 45:57; D&C 46:7-8 contain counsel Peter and Jude gave that can help us avoid false teachings and

remain faithful as we prepare for the Second Coming. The counsel includes living by the Spirit, praying sincerely, and having hope in Christ.

Conclusion

Follow the teachings of Peter and Jude as you strive to live in faith and holiness.

Additional discussion of 1 Peter 1

1 Peter 1:4, 7, 18-19, 23-25 Peter made contrasts between what is corruptible or perishable and what is incorruptible or everlasting. Ponder what you can learn from these contrasts.

Peter taught that Jesus was “*foreordained before the foundation of the world*” to be the Savior (1 Peter 1:20; see also Rev. 13:8). This truth is important to understand. Scriptures such as Moses 4:1-4 and Abraham 3:27-28 revealed in the latter days add to our understanding of the Savior’s foreordination.

1 Peter 2:13-15 Peter gave counsel about the laws of the land. The Lord has revealed his counsel in the latter days about the laws of the land in D&C 58:21-22; D&C 98:4-10; D&C 134:5; Articles of Faith 1:12.

1 Peter 3:18-20; 1 Peter 4:6 Peter taught about the work of preaching the gospel to the dead. In D&C 138:27 we find the account of Jesus going to the spirit world to organize the preaching of the gospel among the dead. **D&C 138:29-37** teaches us why he did this. The Savior’s ministry in the spirit world reveals that because of God’s perfect justice and mercy, all people who have lived on earth will have an opportunity to accept the gospel and enjoy its full blessings.

1 Peter 5:1-4 Peter counseled Church leaders. **1 Peter 5:2; see 2 Peter 1:12-15; D&C 42:12-14** show how Church leaders should “*feed the flock of God*”.

2 Peter 1:20-21 Peter taught in these verses about the source of the scriptures. We ensure that we interpret scriptures correctly by seeking out the inspired interpretations of Church leaders and by seeking the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

“God Is Love”

Lesson 44 – 1 John, 2 John, 3 John

Introduction

What are some of the ways that parents show love for their children? How do children show love for their parents, brothers, and sisters? Aren't we all members of the same family?

In addition to belonging to an earthly family, each of us is a spirit son or daughter of our Heavenly Father, who loves us and desires to bless us. In his epistles, John repeatedly emphasizes how the Father and the Son show their love for us and how we can show our love for them.

Manifestations of Heavenly Father's love for us

1 John 4:8, 16 When he used one word to describe Heavenly Father, John chose “love”. Love is an appropriate word because it is one of His primary attributes.

1 John 3:1-2; (see also **Romans 8:14-17.**) One manifestation of God's love John mentioned in these verses was that God will call us his sons and make us like Christ—glorified, exalted, and joint-heirs with him.

1 John 2:28-29; 1 John 4:7; 1 John 5:1; Gal. 3:26-27; Mosiah 5:5-9; Moroni 7:48 all give us insight into what we must do to be called the sons of God—abide in the Lord, be righteous, love one another, believe that Jesus is the Christ, have faith, be baptized, covenant to obey God's commandments and do his will, be born again spiritually, change through faith in Christ, and be like the Savior. While all of us are spirit children of God, the use of the words “*sons of God*” in 1 John 3:1-2 refers to those who take upon themselves the name of Christ through baptism and honor his name through faith and righteousness.

1 John 4:9-10; (See also John 3:16; 1 John 5:11; 2 Nephi 9:10) The manifestation of God's love John mentioned in these verses is the atonement. The word *propitiation* in 1 John 4:10 refers to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Sending his Son to atone for our sins manifested Heavenly Father's love for us so that we could return to Him through His Only Begotten Son.

1 John 4:13 John mentioned the gift of the Spirit as a manifestation of God's love in this verse. Think about how the Spirit has been an important gift in your life.

1 John 5:14-15 John taught that Heavenly Father will answer our prayers if we ask according to His will. Ponder carefully how prayer has helped you feel Heavenly Father's love. Remember that prayer is essential for us to become like our Father in Heaven because we need to develop a personal relationship with him to understand what he wants us to do and when, where, why, and how to do his will.

1 John 4:19 John taught that “*we love [God], because he first loved us*”. It should be easy for you to name some of the ways God has shown his love for you. Think about how you feel when you consider the ways God has shown his love for you as you read the following...

President Thomas S. Monson said: *“Our Heavenly Father’s plan contains the ultimate expressions of true love. All that we hold dear—even our families, our friends, our joy, our knowledge, our testimonies—would vanish were it not for our Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. ... The world has witnessed no greater gift, nor has it known more lasting love”* (Ensign, May 1993, 62-63).

Manifestations of the Savior’s love for us

1 John 3:16 The atonement is the manifestation of the Savior’s love John mentioned in this verse.

1 John 1:7-9; 1 John 5:11-13; 2 Nephi 9:11-13; Alma 11:40-44 Blessings we receive because of the Savior’s atoning sacrifice include forgiveness, cleansing, redemption from the grave, and eternal life.

1 John 2:1-2 The Savior’s love is manifested by his service as our advocate before the Father. An advocate is one who pleads the cause of another.

D&C 45:3-5 Jesus, as our advocate, pleads for us to be forgiven and be given eternal life.

1 John 3:8 John taught that the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil. The Savior’s life and teachings destroy the devil’s works by testifying of the truth, teaching us the plan of happiness, and giving us the opportunity to accept Jesus as our Redeemer. When we chose good over evil, we overcome any power or influence the devil could exert over us.

Showing our love for Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and others

1 John 2:3-6; (See also John 14:15; 1 John 3:24; 1 John 5:3; 2 John 1:6.) We learn from these verses that we show our love for God by being obedient to his commandments.

2 John 1:4; 3 John 1:4 Our faithfulness and obedience brings joy to our Heavenly Father.

1 John 2:15-17 We learn from these verses that we show our love for God by loving God rather than worldly things. We show love for the world rather than love for God when we seek worldly rewards that will eventually pass away. Think about how you can overcome a love for worldly things.

1 John 4:7-8, 11; (See also 1 John 3:11, 23; 1 John 4:21.) We learn from these verses that when we love one another, we show our love for God.

1 John 2:9, 11; 1 John 3:14-15, 17; 1 John 4:20 John described those who claim to love God but do not *“love one another”* as being in darkness and being blinded. Our love for others is a measure of our love of God because 1) others are his children, 2) they are our siblings; and 3) He commanded us to love one another. It behooves each of us to consider how we can come to feel and demonstrate greater love for each other. In your thoughts about this, it helps to remember how you have been blessed by another person’s love for you.

Consider the blessings of living in a family whose members love each other and love God—then think about how we can help others enjoy those same blessings as part of the family of God.

Conclusion

Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have great love for us. Remember John's teachings as you strive to show your love for Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and for other people.

Additional Teachings of John

“Walk in the light” (1 John 1:7)

1 John 1:6-7 To “*walk in darkness*” is to choose evil over good. To “*walk in the light*” is to be obedient and faithful in making and keeping covenants with the Lord.

John cautioned against the spirit of anti-Christ

In his epistles, John repeatedly warned the Saints to avoid anti-Christ.

1 John 2:22-23; 1 John 4:1-3; 2 John 1:7 John said anti-Christ's deny Christ and try to get us to do the same. The adversary tries to destroy our testimonies of the Savior so that his temptations to do evil will become attractive to us. To keep our testimonies strong we must study the scriptures, seek answers and guidance in prayer, live righteously, and maintain the companionship of the Spirit.

Elder M. Russell Ballard taught: *“Individual, personal testimony of gospel truth, particularly of the divine life and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, is essential to our eternal life. ... Life eternal is predicated upon our own individual, personal knowledge of our Father in Heaven and His Holy Son. Simply knowing about them is not enough. We must have personal, spiritual experiences to anchor us. These come through seeking them in the same intense, single-minded way that a hungry person seeks food”* (Ensign, May 1996, 80).

“No man hath seen God at any time” (1 John 4:12)

If you wonder whether 1 John 4:12 means that man cannot see God, refer to the corresponding verse in the Joseph Smith Translation, which reads, *“No man hath seen God at any time, except them who believe”* (1 John 4:12, footnote 12a). **Exodus 33:9-11; John 6:46; Acts 7:55-56; Doctrine and Covenants D&C 67:10-12; Moses 1:1-2; Abraham 3:11; Joseph Smith—History 1:16-17** all confirm that many prophets have seen God.

“He That Overcometh Shall Inherit All Things”

Lesson 45 – Revelation 1, 12

Introduction

Think of symbols the Lord used in his teaching during his earthly ministry. Did you think of salt, wheat and tares, bread, and olive trees? Symbols are useful in teaching because they can help the learner understand and remember by comparing unfamiliar ideas or things to those that are more familiar; they can have different levels of meaning; they can encourage the learner to think more deeply about what is being taught. Symbols are used throughout the scriptures, but especially in the book of Revelation. The Apostle John, author of the book of Revelation, came out of a culture that used symbolism extensively in its language and literature. Readers today often have difficulty with the symbolism in John’s writings. If we interpret the images literally, the book of Revelation can seem strange and confusing. If we remember that many of the images are symbolic and represent people, things, or concepts with which we are already familiar, the book becomes easier to understand.

John saw several symbols representing parts of the Church of Jesus Christ.

John was one of the Savior’s original Apostles. He had been banished by the Roman government to Patmos, a small island off the west coast of present-day Turkey, for bearing testimony of Jesus Christ. While there, John was visited by an angel and given a revelation that he recorded in letters to the seven branches of the Church in Asia (Rev. 1:1, 9-11). These letters became the book of Revelation.

The book of Revelation is written primarily in symbolic language. Its theme is that *“there will be an eventual triumph on this earth of God over the devil; a permanent victory of good over evil, of the saints over their persecutors, of the kingdom of God over the kingdoms of men and of Satan. ... The details about the beasts, the wars, the angels, the men, etc., contribute to the development of this theme. By a little study, the theme can be perceived even if the details are not completely identified”* (Bible Dictionary, “Revelation of John,” 762).

The three introductory chapters of the book record John’s testimony of the truthfulness of the revelation, John’s instructions from the Lord, and John’s counsel to the seven branches of the Church in Asia. Chapter 4 records John’s vision of heaven, and chapters 5 through 20 record his vision of the triumphant destiny of God’s kingdom. This vision shows the battles against Satan’s kingdom, the destruction of Satan’s kingdom, and the final scenes in the world’s history. After this is a vision of the new heavens and new earth—the world in its celestial state (Rev. 21:1-5). The book of Revelation concludes with the angel’s testimony and additional counsel from the Lord.

Rev. 1:12 The first image, or symbol, John saw in this revelation was seven golden candlesticks.

Rev. 1:20 The candlesticks represented branches of the Church—an appropriate symbol as you can see from **3 Nephi 18:24** and the quotation below.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: *“Candlesticks carry light; they do not create it. Their function is to make it available, not to bring it into being. So by using seven candlesticks to portray the seven*

churches to whom John is now to give counsel, the Lord is showing that his congregations on earth are to carry his light to the world” (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 3 vols. [1966-73], 3:442).

Rev. 1:13 The Savior was in the midst of the seven candlesticks. Today, the Savior is still in the midst of his Church, guiding inspired priesthood and auxiliary leaders and individual members in their callings and responsibilities. It is important for us to know that he is in the midst of his people.

Rev. 1:16 The Savior was holding seven stars in his right hand when he stood in the midst of the seven candlesticks.

Rev. 1:20 and footnote 20b; see also Rev. 2:1, footnote 1a, and Rev. 3:1, footnote 1a. Throughout the Joseph Smith Translation of Revelation 1-3, the word *angels* is changed to *servants*, making it clear that the stars represent the leaders of the seven branches of the Church. Church leaders are like the stars in that they are constant and give direction to those who look for it.

Rev. 1:16 A sword came out of the Savior’s mouth in this vision, which, according to D&C 6:2, represents the word of the Lord.

Heb. 4:12; Helaman 3:29 The word of the Lord is like a sword in that it is quick, powerful, a sharp divider, and able to pierce.

Rev. 1:18 Another symbol the Lord possessed in this revelation was the keys to hell and death. With these keys, the Savior will deliver all people from physical death, and he will deliver the righteous from spiritual death. See **2 Nephi 9:10-13**.

The Lord told the seven branches in Asia about the blessings promised to those who overcome

Chapters 2 and 3 contain the words of the Lord to each of the seven branches of the Church in Asia. The Lord reviewed some of the strengths and weaknesses in each branch and warned the Saints to correct their weaknesses.

Just as the Lord commended and corrected the Church members in Asia, he commends and corrects us today. Take a moment to consider what the Lord might commend us for. Then ponder what the Lord has told us to correct.

In his instructions to the branches of the Church in Asia, the Lord also promised great blessings to those who would overcome the trials and temptations of mortality.

Promises to Those Who Overcome

Rev. 2:1-7 To Ephesus: The Lord warned the Ephesians of their need to repent, but he also promised, *“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life.”* The tree of life represents the love of God (1 Nephi 11:21-22). This is the most desirable of all blessings.

Rev. 2:8-11 To Smyrna: The Lord warned the Saints in Smyrna that they would suffer tribulation, but he also promised, *“He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”*

Alma 12:16, 32; Helaman 14:18 The second death is a spiritual death. The Lord’s promise to the Saints in Smyrna helps us see our tribulations in the proper perspective and realize that the end result is worth whatever trials we may experience in mortality.

Rev. 2:12-17 To Pergamos: The Lord criticized some of the people in Pergamos for following the doctrine of Balaam, an Old Testament prophet who desired earthly honors

and rewards more than he desired to follow the Lord's will. We may have to give up earthly honors and rewards to obey the Lord's will, but we know that fame and earthly fortune will not save us in Heavenly Father's kingdom.

To the Saints in Pergamos the Lord promised, "*To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna.*" The word *hidden* in this context means sacred, or not evident to everyone.

John 6:35, 49-51 The hidden manna could represent Christ as the bread of life that men may eat to receive eternal life.

Rev. 2:18-29 (especially 26-28) To Thyatira: In his words to the Saints in Thyatira, the Lord promised those who overcome the blessings of exaltation and eternal life, when the righteous will rule over heavenly kingdoms.

1 Nephi 11:25; Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 2:27 The rod of iron with which the righteous will rule over nations is the word of God. Think about how you can use the word of God to rule your own life.

Rev. 2:28 mentions the "*morning star*". In Rev. 22:16, we find that the morning star is Jesus. To be given the morning star may include to receive Christ into our lives and to receive the blessings of his Atonement.

Rev. 3:1-6 To Sardis: Blessings the Lord promised to the Saints in Sardis included being clothed in white and having Christ be their advocate before the Father. (See verse 5) Participation in temple ordinances prepares us to be "*clothed in white*" eternally if we keep our temple covenants.

D&C 128:7; see also Exodus 32:33; Alma 5:58; Bible Dictionary, "Book of Life," 626-27 The book of life is a record of our works in mortality.

Rev. 21:10, 23-27; Alma 5:58; D&C 88:2 Those whose names are written in the book and are not blotted out because of wickedness will dwell in the holy city of Jerusalem in the presence of the Lord, where his glory shines forth to all; they will have an inheritance at the right hand of God; they will have a celestial reward.

Rev. 3:7-13 To Philadelphia: Because they had "kept [his] word, and ... not denied [his] name", the Lord said he would keep the Saints in Philadelphia from the hour of temptation. Righteous living makes it easier to resist temptation because the Spirit will guide us as we are faithful and obedient.

The Lord promised to those who overcome, "*I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God.*" (verse 12) To have the name of God and the name of his city written on us means that we become like God and become citizens of his eternal kingdom.

Rev. 3:14-22 To Laodicea: The Lord condemned the Saints in Laodicea who were "*lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot*" (Rev. 15-16). The Lord promised the Laodiceans in

Rev. 3:21, "*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne*". **Romans 8:16-17** explains that blessings symbolized by the promise of sitting with the Lord on his throne include being recognized as his children and reception of a royal inheritance.

When all these promises are considered together, they describe the eternal destiny of the righteous.

D&C 132:20 is a summary of these promises.

John learned that the Saints overcome Satan through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and their testimonies.

As part of his revelation, John saw a symbolic vision of the War in Heaven and its continuation on earth.

The woman described in Rev. 12:1-2, 5 represents the Church of God. The child she brought forth represents the kingdom of God—the government that will exist on the earth during Jesus Christ’s millennial reign. (See Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 12:7; see also Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954-56], 1:229.)

Rev. 12:9 The dragon in Rev 12 represents Satan.

Rev 12:3-4, 7-9 The dragon and his followers were cast out—to the earth—in the War in Heaven.

Rev. 12:17 After he was cast out, the dragon made war on those in mortality. Satan continues fighting those who kept their first estate today. (See **Rev 12:12.**)

President Wilford Woodruff said: *“There are two powers on the earth and in the midst of the inhabitants of the earth—the power of God and the power of the devil. ... When God has had a people on the earth, it matters not in what age, Lucifer, the son of the morning, and the millions of fallen spirits that were cast out of heaven, have warred against God, against Christ, against the work of God, and against the people of God. And they are not backward in doing it in our day and generation. Whenever the Lord set His hand to perform any work, those powers labored to overthrow it”* (in *Deseret Evening News*, 17 Oct. 1896, 9; quoted by Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 56; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 43).

Rev. 12:11 The Church and kingdom of God will finally overcome Satan through the Atonement of Christ and their testimonies of it.

Conclusion

Those who overcome the temptations and trials of the world will inherit the blessings of eternal life. The Savior’s Atonement provides a way for us to overcome if we repent and are faithful.

“He Will Dwell with Them, and They Shall Be His People”

Lesson 46 – Revelation 5-6; 19-22

Introduction

How do you feel when you read the newspaper or watch televised news reports about incidents such as crimes or natural disasters? Turn to and read 2 Timothy 3:1. We are living in the last days, in the times the Apostle Paul described as “*perilous.*” One of the challenges of living in the last days is learning to conquer fear and despair so we can overcome trials and temptations. This lesson will discuss how we can find hope and courage through an understanding of the events to come in the last days. The righteous do not need to fear the Second Coming.

Satan fights against the righteous.

The first three chapters of the book of Revelation pertain to John’s time. The rest of the book deals with events that were future to John, from the Apostasy that occurred after the death of the Apostles to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the final judgment. Chapters 5 and 6 of Revelation use the symbol of a book “*sealed with seven seals*” (Rev. 5:1). Each seal represents a thousand-year period of the earth’s temporal existence (D&C 77:6-7); we are living in the time period represented by the sixth seal. In chapter 6, the Lamb (Jesus Christ) opens the first six seals, showing some of the events associated with each time period.

One thing we learn from chapter 6 is that Satan has fought against the righteous throughout the history of the earth.

Rev. 6:4-11, records some ways Satan has fought the righteous including:

- Violence and warfare (Rev. 6:4, 8)
- Hunger and famine (Rev. 6:5-6, 8. The Roman penny was an average day’s wages and a measure of wheat was one day’s worth of food for one person; verse 6 indicates that a day’s wages would only buy a day’s worth of food for one person.)
- Persecution (Rev. 6:9-11)

Referring to tactics Satan uses today to try to overcome the righteous, **President**

Gordon B. Hinckley stated: *“That war, so bitter, so intense, has gone on, and it has never ceased. It is the war between truth and error, between agency and compulsion, between the followers of Christ and those who have denied Him. His enemies have used every stratagem in that conflict. They’ve indulged in lying and deceit. They’ve employed money and wealth. They’ve tricked the minds of men. They’ve murdered and destroyed and engaged in every other unholy and impure practice to thwart the work of Christ. ... “[Opposition] has been felt in the undying efforts of many, both within and without the Church, to destroy faith, to belittle, to demean, to bear false witness, to tempt and allure and induce our people to practices inconsistent with the teachings and standards of this work of God. ... “The war goes on. It is waged across the world over the issues of agency and compulsion. It is waged by an army of missionaries over the issues of truth and error. It is waged in our own lives, day in and day out, in our*

homes, in our work, in our school associations; it is waged over questions of love and respect, of loyalty and fidelity, of obedience and integrity. We are all involved in it” (Ensign, Nov. 1986, 42, 44-45).

After making the comments quoted above, **President Hinckley** added, “*We are winning [the war against Satan], and the future never looked brighter*” (Ensign, Nov. 1986, 45). We need to maintain hope and a positive outlook as we fight the war against Satan. Resources we have to strengthen us against the power of Satan and his followers include the scriptures and the teachings of living prophets, priesthood authority, temples, and association with other members of the Church.

Satan will be bound, and Christ will reign in triumph during the Millennium.

John identified many plagues, wars, and judgments that would occur before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (Rev. 8). Then, in Rev. 19, he described the coming of the Lord, symbolized by a marriage supper (Rev. 19:7-9). The wife of the Lamb represents The Church of Jesus Christ. The symbol of the marriage supper, with Christ as the bridegroom and the Church as the bride, suggests the closest of relationships between the Lord and his Church.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained: “*The elders of Israel are now issuing the invitations to the marriage supper of the Lord; those who believe and obey the gospel thereby accept the invitation and shall sit in due course ... at the marriage feast*” (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 3 vols. [1966-73], 3:563-64).

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ will usher in the Millennium, a thousand-year period when Christ will reign personally upon the earth.

Rev. 20:1-3 Satan will be bound during the Millennium.

1 Nephi 22:26; D&C 45:55, 58 The saints will dwell in righteousness with Christ as their king when Satan is bound. Through righteous living, we can limit the power of Satan in our lives right now.

Rev. 20:7-8; D&C 88:111-113 After the Millennium, Satan will be loosed for a season, and one last great battle will be fought between the armies of God and the armies of Satan. This is sometimes called the battle of Gog and Magog.

Rev. 20:9-11; D&C 88:114-115 This great battle at the end of the Millennium will end in triumph for the Lord and his followers.

Since the outcome of this battle is already known, Pres. Benson helped us understand our responsibility regarding this victory. **President Ezra Taft Benson** said: “*Each day the forces of evil and the forces of good enlist new recruits. Each day we personally make many decisions showing the cause we support. The final outcome is certain—the forces of righteousness will win. But what remains to be seen is where each of us personally, now and in the future, will stand in this battle—and how tall we will stand. Will we be true to our last days and fulfill our foreordained missions?*” (“In His Steps,” Ensign, Sept. 1988, 2).

After the last judgment, the righteous will dwell with God.

After the last great battle, the final judgment will occur. Rev. 20:12 teaches us about how we will be judged.

Rev. 21:3-7 Blessings that will come to those who are judged to be righteous include:

- Dwelling in God’s presence (Rev. 21:3).
- No longer experiencing death, sorrow, crying, or pain (Rev. 21:4).

- Inheriting all things as sons and daughters of God (Rev. 21:7).

Rev. 21:10-22 describes the celestial glory of the earth and the city in which those who have attained celestial glory will reside. There is no temple in the celestial city. The purpose of the temple is to bring us closer to God and teach us of his plan. When we live with him again, temples will no longer be necessary.

Rev. 22:14 tells us we must keep the commandments to be able to enter the gates of the eternal city.

President David O. McKay told of a vision in which he saw a beautiful city, many people dressed in white, and the Savior: *“The city, I understood, was [the Savior’s]. It was the City Eternal; and the people following him were to abide there in peace and eternal happiness.*

“But who were they?”

*“As if the Savior read my thoughts, he answered by pointing to a semicircle that then appeared above them, and on which were written in gold the words: **These Are They Who Have Overcome the World—Who Have Truly Been Born Again!**”* (*Cherished Experiences from the Writings of President David O. McKay*, comp. Clare Middlemiss [1976], 60).

The seven seals in the book of Revelation

The following chart provides additional information about each of the seven seals. The chart may also be useful in understanding the structure of the book of Revelation.

Seal	Major Events
First seal	The creation and fall of Adam and Eve; the ministry of Enoch and the translation of his city into heaven (Rev. 6:1-2).
Second seal	Noah and the Flood (Rev. 6:3-4).
Third seal	Ministries of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph (Rev. 6:5-6).
Fourth seal	Ministry of Moses; the Exodus; the period of reign by judges; the period of reign by kings; the division of the kingdom; the conquering of the kingdoms (Rev. 6:7-8).
Fifth seal	The birth, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; the establishment of his Church and the ministry of the Apostles; martyrdom of the Apostles; the Apostasy (Rev. 6:9-11).
Sixth seal	Continuation of the Apostasy; restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith; signs of the times manifest (Rev. 6:12-17; Rev. 7:1-8).

Seventh seal	Wars, plagues, and desolation; Second Coming of the Lord (Rev. 8:1-19). Millennium of peace (Rev. 20:1-6). Satan loosed for a season, the last great battle, and the final judgment (Rev. 20:7-15).
After the seventh seal	The earth is celestialized (Rev. 21:1-22).

The first five seals are covered in 11 verses, the sixth seal is covered in 14 verses, and the seventh seal is covered in 226 verses. Note the emphasis on the seventh seal. John gave the most attention to the events of our time period and the one to come. The book of Revelation was written for our day, and our lives will be blessed as we study it and prepare for the Second Coming of the Savior.

Conclusion

The New Testament ends with a message of great hope. Prophets like John the Revelator have seen the things that are to come and have told us of the blessings we will receive if we remain righteous and endure to the end. The righteous will triumph at the end of the world. Take courage and hope from this knowledge as you stand against wickedness and seek to overcome the obstacles of this life.