

“This Is My Work and My Glory”

Lesson 1 - Moses 1

This lesson will help remind us that we are children of Our Heavenly Father, free agents who can exercise agency to resist the temptations presented by Satan, and that Our Heavenly Father has made it His work and His glory to save and exalt us as we merit either immortality or exaltation.

Background: In the Old Testament, we find accounts of God’s dealings with the children of the covenant from the Creation of this world until about four hundred years prior to the birth of the Savior. As we study these scriptures, we will find examples of faith and obedience contrasted with accounts of disbelief, disobedience, direct opposition to God’s plans and commandments, and the consequences of each. Prophecies are a major focus of the Old Testament as the Messiah’s coming is foretold and His Atonement, Second Coming, and Millennial reign are depicted by the prophets of old.

While we study the Old Testament, we will include the books of Moses and Abraham from the Pearl of Great Price because they help clarify and expand the teachings of Genesis. Specifically, Moses is extracted from Joseph Smith’s translation of the Bible. The Book of Abraham came to us as Joseph translated ancient Egyptian papyri.

God taught that Moses is a son of God. Moses 1:1-11

As Moses experienced the events in **Moses 1:1-7** under the influence of the Holy Ghost, he learned some things about himself as he spoke with God face to face. Moses was informed that he is a son of God (verse 4) and was created in the similitude of the Father’s Only Begotten Son, the Savior (verse 6). Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught: *“Consider the power of the idea taught in our beloved song ‘I Am a Child of God.’ ...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...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)

When God called Moses his “son” and told him that he shared important characteristics with the Savior, He instilled confidence and a sense of worth in Moses. We can apply that principle as parents by giving our children a sense of worth as a valued member of our family and a treasured son or daughter in a strong family line of worthwhile ancestors. We strengthen our marriages when we convey a proper sense of individual worth to a beloved spouse. Our friendships are strengthened when we show love and confidence in the brothers and sisters of our extended family. If we fail to convey a sense of worth to those around us and a genuine respect for them, we do great harm to those relationships.

Moses 1:9 recounts that Moses was “*left unto himself*”. It is a fact of our existence here in the telestial world that we will endure times when we will be left unto ourselves. Such times are characterized by a feeling that we are alone, without the Spirit, in the “*mists of darkness*” (in the words of the Book of Mormon), or in the lone and dreary world beset by temptations, trials, and continual problems. Are we ever really alone and solely on our own—abandoned by Our Father and Our Savior? According to **Moses 1:15**, the Spirit did not entirely leave Moses, nor are we entirely abandoned to telestial influences. When we do experience the feeling of being “*left unto [ourselves]*”, we should realize that (1) this condition may or may NOT be the product of wrongdoing on our part, (2) as expressed in verse 15, God does not leave us entirely alone, and (3) we can use such experiences to develop personal strength and endurance, increase the strength, depth and intensity of our testimony—proving our devotion to Heavenly Father by facing trials and tribulations with faith, applying the principles of the gospel to guide our decisions and actions, praying sincerely and humbly for courage and spiritual strength to endure and succeed in our righteous endeavors, and increasing our faith by realizing that God does and will sustain us even in the “*mists of darkness*” and we can endure to the end if we desire to do so with all our heart, might, mind, and strength.

After experiencing an awakening of his potential while in the presence of God, Moses experienced a different perspective in **Moses 1:10**. He realized that while his potential as a son of God and a follower of the Savior was immeasurable, he also realized that without God, he was “*nothing*”. Relatively speaking, this is true because we are so powerless and impotent when compared to God, but we overcome our weaknesses as we develop our Godlike potential through gaining knowledge and practicing obedience.

Moses had a Confrontation with Satan Moses 1: 12-23

Moses 1:12. When Satan confronted Moses, he challenged his divine potential by calling him a “*son of man*” (not a son of God), and commanding Moses to worship him. Satan wants us all to doubt or forget that we are the offspring of Heavenly parents because that helps him convince us to follow him and his evil designs.

Moses 1:13. The response of Moses shows that his testimony of divine origin enabled him to resist Satan’s challenge.

Moses 1:16, 18, 20, 21. In each verse, Moses commands Satan to depart, demonstrating that we will be challenged repeatedly and must repeatedly choose to follow Christ and deny Satan any victory. We must endure to the end.

Moses 1:18, 20, 21. Here we see that the key to conquering Satan is in calling on our Father to strengthen us in times of trial and temptation. Our daily prayers should give us strength and support our resolve to resist daily temptation. In addition, we must resolve to stay away from known temptations, study the scriptures, be honest each day, incorporate service and righteous activities into our day, and associate with those who strengthen us with their good examples and uplifting thoughts.

God appeared again and taught Moses of his work and his glory. Moses 1:24-39

Beholding the glory of God again after his successful confrontation with Satan, Moses was given another vision of the earth and its inhabitants. In **Moses 1:30**, we see that Moses had two questions about (1) why the things he saw were so, and (2) by what they were made. In **Moses 1:31-32, 39**, God answers his questions. Moses is told that God made these things for his own purpose and that He made them through His Son, the Only Begotten. He further states that his work and glory is “*to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man*”.

Moses 1:35. Although numberless worlds have been created, Moses was given absolute assurance that all the creations are numbered unto God, and “*...they are mine and I know them*”. As Latter-day Saints, we should have developed a testimony, because of our personal experiences, that Our Heavenly Father and Our Savior, Jesus Christ, know and love us personally as the individual children that we are. We have all had experiences that have taught us that they are aware of our needs and that they intervene on our behalf, bless us, and demonstrate their love for us.

Concerning **Moses 1:39**, Elder James E. Faust said: “*There is a distinction between immortality, or eternal existence, and eternal life, which is to have a place in the presence of God. Through the grace of Jesus Christ, immortality comes to all..., just or unjust, righteous or wicked. However, eternal life is ‘the greatest of all the gifts of God’ (D&C 14:7). We obtain this great gift, according to the Lord, ‘if you keep my commandments and endure to the end.’ If we so endure, the promise is, ‘you shall have eternal life’ (D&C 14:7)*” (Ensign, Nov. 1988, 12).

If we are to achieve eternal life and assist Our Heavenly Father in his work and his glory, we need to understand the plan of salvation and how we play a part in it. That is why this knowledge was given to Moses and is given to us in the scriptures. President Gordon B. Hinckley said: “*We are here to assist our Father in His work and His glory, ‘to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man’ (Moses 1:39). Your obligation is as serious in your sphere of responsibility as is my obligation in my sphere. No calling in this church is small or of little consequence. All of us in the pursuit of our duty touch the lives of others. To each of us in our respective responsibilities the Lord has said: ... ‘In doing these things thou wilt do the greatest good unto thy fellow beings, and wilt promote the glory of him who is your Lord’ (D&C 81:4)*” (Ensign, May 1995, 71).

“Thou Wast Chosen Before Thou Wast Born”

Lesson 2 - Abraham 3; Moses 4:1-4

This lesson explains the doctrine of foreordination and the responsibility we each have to assist in building up the kingdom of God on the earth and bring our brethren and sisters to Christ and his gospel. Foreordination is defined as our Heavenly Father's premortal ordination of his spirit children to fulfill certain missions and responsibilities while in mortality. In the premortal existence, many spirit children were foreordained to accomplish important milestones in Heavenly Father's plan for this earth.

Abraham learned that God had selected and foreordained many spirits to specific missions in mortality. Abraham 3:11-12, 22-23 and D&C 138:53-57.

Abraham 3:22-23. The pre-Creation Council in Heaven was shown to Abraham in vision. Latter-day prophets have indicated that this was actually a series of meetings and not just one session. All of us, as spirit children, or “intelligences”, were in attendance as Heavenly Father presided over the meeting.

Some were designated as being “*noble and great ones*”. Abraham was among those so designated. In various places at varied times, prophets have explained that the “*noble and great ones*” included all of the prophets and other Church leaders while some explanations have included all Melchizedek priesthood holders as part of this group. In 1918, President Joseph F. Smith's vision of the spirit world included a vision of some of these “*noble and great ones*” including his father, Hyrum Smith, the Prophet Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Wilford Woodruff.

When Abraham was foreordained before the world was formed, he was “*chosen before [he] was born*”. (Abraham 3:23). In **D&C 138:53-56**, we see that Latter-day prophets were foreordained to 1) come forth in the fullness of times (this dispensation), 2) lay the foundations of the great latter-day work, 3) build temples and teach the ordinances that must be performed therein to redeem the dead, 4) rule over the Church, and 5) labor in the vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men. Those who were foreordained were taught much of what they needed to know before they left their pre-mortal home.

While foreordination placed great responsibility on that individual and blessed that person with choice opportunities, it did not guarantee that each individual so ordained would actually complete his mission. Indeed, agency was and is available to each foreordained spirit child. Choices in this life may affect the worthiness and willingness of a person to accept the foreordination and its requirements.

D&C 138:56. What might you have been foreordained to do? President Ezra Taft Benson taught: “*God has held you in reserve to make your appearance in the final days before the second coming of the Lord. Some individuals will fall away; but the kingdom of God will remain intact to welcome the return of its head—even Jesus Christ. While our generation will be comparable in wickedness to the days of Noah, when the Lord cleansed the earth by flood, there is a major difference this time. It is that God has saved for the final inning some of His strongest children, who will help bear off the kingdom triumphantly... Make no mistake about it—you are a marked generation. There has never been more expected of the faithful in such a short period of time than there is of us*” (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [1988], 104-5).

We can gain insight into our foreordained calling by 1) living the gospel, 2) studying our patriarchal blessings, and 3) seeking personal revelation. We can assure that we fulfill our foreordained responsibilities by 1) becoming worthy and maintaining that worthiness and 2) being willing to do whatever the Lord requires of us in this life, no matter what sacrifices that may entail. Remembering the promise in **D&C 58:27-28** will also help us fulfill our mission here.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said: *“While here, we have learning to gain, work to do, service to give. We are here with a marvelous inheritance, a divine endowment. How different this world would be if every person realized that all of his actions have eternal consequences. How much more satisfying our years may be if in our accumulation of knowledge, in our relationships with others, in our business affairs, in our courtship and marriage, and in our family rearing, we recognize that we form each day the stuff of which eternity is made...Life is forever. Live each day as if you were going to live eternally, for you surely shall.”* (Pillars of Truth,” *Ensign*, January 1994, pp.2, 4)

Jesus Christ was chosen in the Council in Heaven to be our Savior and we willingly chose to be his disciples. Those who chose not to follow the Savior were cast out with Satan. Abraham 3:24-28 and Moses 4:1-4.

Abraham 3:27, Moses 4:1-2. These verses indicate that during the Council in Heaven, two spirits offered to assume the responsibilities of being the Savior for the Father’s spirit children. Their offers differed significantly. Jesus desired to follow the Father’s plan and give all the glory to the Father. Seeking to satisfy his own ambitions, Lucifer offered his own plan, which included compulsion as a substitute for free agency, and keeping all the glory for himself rather than honoring the Father.

The choice of the Father is recorded in **Moses 4:2-3**. Father chose Jesus 1) because of his obedience, devotion, and the selflessness of his motives, and 2) because Satan rebelled, disobeyed, sought to destroy the principle of free agency, and selfishly desired power.

Because we are now in mortality and possess bodies, it is obvious that we chose to follow Christ and the Father’s plan that he presented in the Council in Heaven.

Abraham 3:26. In this scripture, *first estate* refers to our premortal life, while *second estate* has reference to this mortal existence. We kept our first estate by choosing to follow Christ rather than Satan. Because we were faithful in that choice, we received the opportunity to be born into mortality. Then, if we are faithful and obedient in this second estate, we *“shall have glory added upon [our] heads for ever and ever.”* The question then becomes, how do we keep this second estate? – by following the commandments, developing a Christlike personality, and enduring to the end.

Moses 4:3, Abraham 3:28, Revelation 12:7-9, D&C 29:36-37. Each of these verses reveals the fate of Satan and his willing followers. As a result of their choices, they were cast out of heaven and were prevented from possessing mortal bodies of their own. Their eternal progression was stopped.

Moses 4:4 tells us what the spirits who followed Satan are doing today. They try to deceive and tempt men and make them captive to evil. Some of us in this estate accept their temptations and give up our freedom.

Abraham 3:24-25 promises that we will be tested in our willingness to follow the commandments. We must prove our faithfulness through our attitudes and actions. Notice that the scripture indicates that it will be seen *“if they will do **all** things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”* If you have a weakness or vulnerability, you can be sure it will be tested to a sufficient degree to **prove** your worthiness beyond doubt.

Jesus Christ is fulfilling his role as our foreordained Savior. We must decide to follow him if we are to fulfill our foreordained missions on this earth at this crucial time preceding His Second Coming.

“The Creation”

Lesson 3 - Moses 1:27-42; 2-3

How much information would you give if a preschool child asked, “*How does an airplane stay in the air?*” or, “*How does a TV work?*” Typically, we might answer in broad generalities with few details because we would try to suit the answer to our perception of the child’s limited understanding. What does that have to do with today’s lesson? Well, as we review the scriptures concerning the Creation, we will see that the Lord has revealed only the portion of truth that is suited to our mortal understanding and the level of detail that we need to know to gain salvation on this earth.

Moses’ vision of the Creation. Moses 1:27-42.

Moses was the author of the Creation account found in Genesis (Moses 1:40; 2:1). **Moses 1:40-41** tells us his reason for writing the account. Moses was commanded to write it by God, so that even when some of the material had been taken from the Genesis account, another prophet could restore the knowledge that had been given to Moses by his Heavenly Father.

Moses 1:27-39 teaches us that God’s power is essentially immeasurable and incomprehensible to man’s understanding. Innumerable worlds have been created—some that have “passed away” and some that “now stand”. But while more worlds have been created than we can comprehend, God assured Moses that He knows them all. He impressed upon Moses that there was no end to his works and then gave us scriptural assurance that man is important to our Creator. He sums up His purpose for being in simply saying that, “...*this is work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.*” The fact that we are the central focus of his life and that our progression is his work, when coupled with the knowledge that He knows each of us individually, should assure us that God loves us as our Father. In spite of the vast numbers of his creations, Father does know you as an individual. [As our local High Priests Group Leader said not long ago about this point...(paraphrased)...“With millions...billions of worlds in many universes, yes, God does care about what you watch on TV.”]

When you read and compare the Creation accounts found in *Genesis*, the *Book of Moses*, and the *Book of Abraham*, it is obvious that each differs in certain respects from the others. This is because Moses and Abraham recorded what they saw in visions concerning the organization of this earth. Each of them chose to include slightly differing details. The Old Testament account of the Creation found in Genesis was originally the record of Moses, but later, some of his personal account was lost. The Book of Moses in *The Pearl of Great Price* restores the fullness of his original account.

Moses learned that God created all things. Moses 2:1-25; 3:1-4.

The Creator

Because it is important for us to know who created this earth for us, the following scriptures answer that question: **Moses 1:32; 2:1; John 1:1-3, 14; Hebrews 1:1-2; Mosiah 3:8; D&C 14:9.**

The Purpose of Creation

Revelations about the purpose of the Creation include the following: **Moses 1:39; Abraham 3:24-25; 1 Nephi 17:36; 2 Nephi 2:11-15.**

The creation was necessary to provide a place where Heavenly Father’s spirit children could possess a physical body and then be tested to see if they would willingly obey the Father’s commandments even when they were not in the direct presence of the Father. The earth then, is the place of testing for mortals who kept their first estate but who must prove their worthiness here to merit eternal life rather than immortality. The faithful who use their agency properly, prove

obedient to the commandments, and develop Christ-like natures will receive the blessing of eternal life. *Note: The purposes and importance of the Creation are only explained in latter-day revelation.*

Preparation for Eternal Life

Mortality, or this earth life, prepares us for eternal life by:

- Allowing us to receive physical bodies
- Giving us the opportunity to exercise free agency and thereby, learn to use it properly
- Letting us gain knowledge from experience and being taught by others
- Forming family units that may continue on into the eternities if we so chose and live worthily
- Receiving the priesthood ordinances necessary for salvation and exaltation
- Allowing us to make covenants that edify and inspire us to achieve our full potential

As God reviewed the Creation, he spoke about the results thereof:

Moses 2:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31; and 3:2 all show that God judged his creative work to be “good”. We may profit by reviewing this creation around us and noting those elements that we individually consider “good”. Some items in our environment are beautiful, some functional, some impressive, and some are such that we regularly ignore them. Much of our appreciation (or lack thereof) for this earth and its features and benefits is not so much a function of the earth’s characteristics as it is a reflection of our attitudes and values.

Abraham 3:24; 4:1. Here the scriptures teach that the earth was not created from nothing, but rather was organized from existing matter. The Prophet Joseph Smith said: *“The word create came from the [Hebrew] word baurau which does not mean to create out of nothing; it means to organize; the same as man would organize materials and build a ship. Hence, we infer that God had materials to organize the world out of chaos—chaotic matter”* (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 350-51).

Moses learned that men and women are created in the image of God. Moses 2:26-31; 3:7, 15-25.

Moses 2:26-27 teaches that man, both male and female, were created in God’s image.

The First Presidency said: *“All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity”* (*Improvement Era*, Nov. 1909, 78).

The knowledge that we are indeed created in the image of God should affect the way we live our lives and the relationships we create with others.

Moses 7:30 teaches us something about God’s individual care for each of us—that He is just, merciful, and kind in his dealings with us while we endure testing here on this earth.

Moses 2:26 says that man was to be given dominion over the creations on this earth. If we take this responsibility seriously as stewards, we will show respect for the earth and we will care for His creations just as if we could see Him here watching how we care for the earth, the fowls, the fishes, and every living creature found on the earth, in the air, or in the seas.

Length of the Creation

Some decades ago, the Council of the Twelve Apostles was asked to settle the controversy about the time required for the Creation and the length of a “day” in the Creation. Some members of the Church took the position that a day was a 24-hour period; some believed that a day was an indeterminate period of time designated by accomplishment of events rather than a particular duration of set time measurements; and others were of the opinion that a day in the Creation was the same as stated in Peter 3:8 where Peter said that *“one day is with the Lord as a thousand years”* (See also Abraham 3:4). The decision of the Quorum was that the Lord had not revealed the length of the Creation—therefore, a Latter-day Saint may chose to believe any of those definitions since no “doctrine” has been given which binds faithful saints to accept one definition over another.

“Because of My Transgression My Eyes Are Opened”

Lesson 4 - Moses 4; 5:1-15; 6:48-62

Today, we will review another of the three “pillars of eternity” which, according to Elder Bruce R. McConkie, make our salvation possible—The Creation, The Fall, and The Atonement.

The Fall of Adam and Eve and its effects on them and us. Moses 4; 5:10-11; 6:48-49, 55-56.

- **Moses 2:28** - In the Garden of Eden, God gave Adam and Eve the commandment to “*be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth*”.
- **Moses 3:17** – A second commandment forbade the eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As long as they obeyed this commandment and never ate of the forbidden fruit, they would live in the garden and be immortal. But if they did not enter into mortality, they could not multiply, replenish the earth, and have joy in their posterity.
- This conflict between the two commandments was intended by Heavenly Father to provide them with a choice because they could not obey both commandments—choice was required.

Moses 4:6-31 provides us with an account of how the Fall was brought about.

- Satan did not know the mind of God and sought to beguile Eve
- Eve told the serpent that God had commanded them not to partake of the tree in the midst of the Garden—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they partook, they would die.
- The serpent lied to Eve, telling her that she would not die, but would gain knowledge of good and evil and become as gods
- Eve partook, desiring to be wise, and persuaded Adam to partake, so their eyes were opened
- When they heard the voice of God, they hid because they were naked
- They explained the events of their transgression to Heavenly Father
- Heavenly Father cursed Satan for beguiling Eve and put enmity between Satan and mankind
- Adam and Eve were told that the ground would be cursed for their sake and that Eve’s conception and sorrow would be multiplied. They were told that they would eat their bread by “*the sweat of thy face*”.

The Fall’s Results – Note that many of the results of the Fall were restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith and therefore, are not generally known in the world.

- **Moses 5:11; 6:48, 2 Nephi 2:22, 25** – Adam and Eve could become parents, opening the way for us to come to earth and receive our mortal bodies.
- **Moses 4:25; 6:48; 2 Nephi 9:6** – Physical death became effective on all mortals, meaning that our bodies and spirits would be separated at the end of our mortality
- **Moses 4:29; 6:49; 2 Nephi 9:6** – All of us would experience spiritual death—separation from God’s presence.
- **Moses 6:48; Genesis 3:16-17** – We will experience misery and woe
- **Moses 6:49, 55; 2 Nephi 2:22-23** – Having free agency and opposition (choices), we can sin
- **Moses 4:23-25** – We must work in mortality because the ground is cursed
- **Moses 4:28; 6:55-56; 2 Nephi 2:23; Genesis 3:22** – We can learn to recognize and distinguish between good and evil
- **Moses 5:10; 2 Nephi 2:23, 25** – We are capable of joy in mortality
- **Moses 5:11** – We may experience the joy of redemption
- **Moses 5:11** - It is possible for us to obtain eternal life
- Latter-day revelation teaches us that the Fall is beneficial to us. We now have the opportunity to make the Plan of Salvation effective for us, so that as we choose righteousness and obedience by shunning evil and choosing the good, we can pass the test of mortality and prove ourselves worthy of eternal life.
- God foresaw the Fall. It was incorporated into His plan as a necessary element of the Plan of Salvation. In this way, man entered mortality by his own choice. Even though Satan played a part in persuading Adam and Eve to make the choice, God’s plan was not frustrated as Satan wished. Satan is incapable of thwarting Heavenly Father’s plans or His purposes.

Jesus Christ's Atonement overcomes physical and spiritual death. Moses 5:14-15; 6:50-54, 57-62.

- The Fall of Adam and Eve introduced both physical and spiritual death into this world. Physical death is the separation of the body and the spirit that occurs when our mortal life is over. The spiritual death is the separation of man from the presence of God. That death occurred as our first parents were driven from the Garden of Eden. As mortals, we cannot overcome either of these deaths on our own. In Heavenly Father's plan, we may only overcome the two deaths through the atoning sacrifice of his Only Begotten Son, who came to mortality to redeem his Father's children. (Alma 22:14)

- **Moses 5:10-15; 6:48-62; 2 Nephi 9:6-10.** The prophets who have spoken or written about the Fall have also taught about the Redeemer's atonement. These two events and the doctrinal teachings about them need to be taught together because the Fall created the need for the Atonement. While the Fall brought about the two deaths, the Atonement overcame both of them.

President Ezra Taft Benson said: *"The plan of redemption must start with the fall of Adam. In the words of Moroni, 'By Adam came the fall of man. And because of the fall of man came Jesus Christ, ... and because of Jesus Christ came the redemption of man' (Moroni 9:12). Just as a man does not really desire food until he is hungry, so he does not desire the salvation of Christ until he knows why he needs Christ. No one adequately and properly knows why he needs Christ until he understands and accepts the doctrine of the Fall and its effects upon all mankind"* (Ensign, May 1987, 85).

- **1 Corinthians 15:20-22; 2 Nephi 2:8; 9:6.** We are saved from physical death through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, so all will be resurrected to an immortal state.

- **Moses 5:14-15; 6:50-52; 59; Helaman 14:15-18; D&C 19:15-19.** These scriptures teach that because of Christ's atonement, we can be cleansed and become worthy to dwell with God if we develop faith in Christ, repent, accept baptism and its covenants, receive the baptism of the Spirit through confirmation and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and become obedient to God's commandments.

- **2 Nephi 9:10.** In this Book of Mormon passage, Jacob rejoiced that the Savior's atoning sacrifice redeemed man from the grave.

Upon entering into mortality, Adam and Eve became parents, taught the gospel to their children, and worshiped God, obeying his commandments. Moses 5:1-9, 12.

- **Moses 5:1-5, 12** record what Adam and Eve did after being cast out of the garden. They began to labor, tilling the land and working hard to make a living (farming and tending flocks). Even though they prayed and heard the voice of the Lord, they were shut out from his presence. Adam and Eve received commandments requiring worship and offerings. They blessed the name of the Lord and taught their sons and daughters. When you consider what they did, it has a lot of similarity to your life.

- **Moses 5:1-9, 12** instruct us about the purposes of our lives. We are to work, multiply and replenish the earth, pray, obey the commandments, do that which we do in the name of the Savior, repent, be willing to be redeemed, and teach our families correctly.

- **Moses 5:5-9** record an important commandment to Adam and Eve. Note that even though Adam did not understand the purpose of what he was required to do, he did it faithfully because the Lord commanded it. The Prophet Joseph Smith said, *"Whatever God requires is right, ... although we may not see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire"* (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 256).

- **Moses 5:7-9** reminds us of the purpose of the sacrifices that Adam offered. They were a likeness of Heavenly Father's sacrifice of his Only Begotten Son. The point was to remind Adam and his posterity that all mankind may be redeemed from the effects of the Fall through Christ's Atonement. In this dispensation, we remember the sacrifice of the Savior through the sacrament rather than animal sacrifice.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks: *"It was Eve who first transgressed the limits of Eden in order to initiate the conditions of mortality. Her act, whatever its nature, was formally a transgression but eternally a glorious necessity to open the doorway toward eternal life. Adam showed his wisdom by doing the same..."* "We

celebrate Eve's act and honor her wisdom and courage in the great episode called the Fall...Elder Joseph Fielding Smith said: 'I never speak of the part Eve took in this fall as a sin, nor do I accuse Adam of a sin...This was a transgression of the law, but not a sin.'...

"This suggested contrast between a sin and a transgression reminds us of the careful wording in the second Article of Faith: "We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression". It also echoes a familiar distinction in the law. Some acts, like murder, are crimes because they are inherently wrong. Other acts, like operating without a license, are crimes only because they are legally prohibited. Under these distinctions, the act that produced the Fall was not a sin—inherently wrong—but a transgression—wrong because it was formally prohibited. These words are not always used to denote something different, but this distinction seems meaningful in the circumstances of the Fall" (Ensign, Nov. 1993, 73).

“If Thou Doest Well, Thou Shalt Be Accepted”

Lesson 5 - Moses 5 – 7

In today's lesson, it will be illustrated that choices to follow Jesus Christ lead to liberty, happiness, and eternal life, while choices to follow Satan lead to misery and captivity.

Cain covenanted with Satan, killed Abel, and was cursed by the Lord. Moses 5:16-41.

As parents, Adam and Eve hoped that Cain, their son, would choose to follow the Lord, doing as they did. Cain, however, “*hearkened not*” to his earthly parents or the Lord. He asked, “*Who is the Lord that I should know him?*” (Moses 5:16). Obviously, Cain's attitude toward the Lord was prideful, irreverent, dismissive, arrogant, and foolish. **Alma 22:17-18** teaches us one of the things we must do to come to know God—desire to know Him and give away all our sins.

- **Moses 5:18** tells us why Cain made an offering to the Lord—because Satan commanded him.
- **Moses 5:19** informs us that Cain's offering was the “*fruit of the ground*”.
- **Moses 5:5, 20-23** records that the Lord received Abel's sacrifice but rejected Cain's. Why? Because Abel had obeyed the Lord's commandment and Cain had followed Satan's command. It was important to make the sacrifice in the manner specified by the Lord.
- The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “*Abel offered to God a sacrifice that was accepted, which was the firstlings of the flock. Cain offered of the fruit of the ground, and was not accepted, because he could not do it in faith...Shedding the blood of the Only Begotten to atone for man...was the plan of redemption; ...and as the sacrifice was instituted for a type, by which man was to discern the great Sacrifice which God had prepared; to order a sacrifice contrary to that, no faith could be exercised...; consequently Cain could have no faith; and whatsoever is not of faith, is sin*” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 58).
- **Moses 5:21, 26** record Cain's reaction when the Lord rejected his offering and called upon him to repent. He was “*wroth*”, meaning “forceful, vindictive anger”. As we review the attitude and actions of Cain, we see that it was hard—very hard—for him to be called to repentance. That is a common failure of the natural man, so we need to be sure that we do not fall into a similar attitude or pattern of behavior. To assure that, the key is to be humble and have a contrite heart.
- **Moses 5: 33** records Cain's boast that, after having killed Abel, he was “*free*”. He obviously thought that he was free of having to listen to his brother's counsel (“voice”, verse 26) and would now have dominion over his brother's flocks. In truth, Cain's disobedience had limited his freedom because he would have to live with the consequences of his evil action. Obedience actually increases our freedom since no limitations are placed upon us by sin.
- **Moses 5:34** contains Cain's infamous reply to the Lord's inquiry about Abel's whereabouts. We, in the gospel, know full well that we are indeed our brothers' (and sisters') keepers. Bishop Robert L. Simpson said: “*The world today tells you to leave your friend alone. He has the right to come and go as he pleases. The world tells you that persuasion to attend church or priesthood meeting or to discard a bad habit might lead to frustration and undue pressures; but again I repeat the word of the Lord: You are your brother's keeper, and when you are converted, you have an obligation to strengthen your brother*” (Ensign, Dec. 1971, 103).
- **Moses 5:23-25 and 36-41** emphasize the results of Cain's choices. He was cast out and became a fugitive. He became known throughout history as the one who introduced lies and murder into mortality because he chose to hearken to Satan and disobey the Lord.
- **Moses 5:41-43, 49-52, 55** show how Cain's choices affected his family. Your choices about whom you will follow and the choices you make about right and wrong are never isolated to you.

Enoch preached repentance to the people. Moses 6:26-63.

Moses 6:31 let us see how Enoch felt when he was called by the Lord to preach repentance. He questioned why the Lord would call a “*lad*” who was hated by the people and slow of speech.

Moses 6:32-34 assures Enoch that—if he is faithful and does as commanded—he will be protected, inspired in his speech, his words will be justified, he will walk with the Lord and have power over the mountains and rivers (the power to work miracles). From this we learn that the Lord chooses his leaders based on their heart, not outward appearances. (See 1 Samuel 16:7).

In addition, we learn that even when we do not feel confident and capable, we should trust the Lord's judgment and serve him willingly in whatever calling he sees fit to extend to us.

Moses 6:37-39 tells us that all the people took offence at Enoch's preaching, but even so, they were curious and assembled to hear this "wild man". They became fearful of him and his prophecies. In our day, there are those who find the prophet's words insulting and offensive, but if they had a testimony of his calling, they could learn to follow him even when they disagree.

Moses 6:47-63*. (These scriptures were also referenced in Lesson 4). Enoch taught the doctrines of the gospel to the people.

Moses 6:56 teaches that the Lord has made us "*agents unto ourselves*", meaning that he has given us the power to choose for ourselves. Agency is necessary to the Plan of Salvation because with the power to choose comes the responsibility and accountability for those choices and the results of our choices. Obviously, there are vastly different consequences that accompany the choice to follow Satan versus the result of choosing to follow Christ. See **2 Nephi 2:25-27**.

The City of Enoch was taken to heaven when the people were of one heart and one mind.

Moses 7:13 records how literally the Lord fulfilled his promises to make Enoch powerful over the mountains and rivers and capable of miracles. In our day, the prophets possess that same power of performing miracles as necessary under the inspired direction of the Lord.

Moses 7:17-18 tells us that the Lord's glory was upon his people, their land, their places in the mountains, and their high places. The Lord called their city "*Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind and dwelt in righteousness.*" As a people we need to become one in the Church and in our families, so in class, suggest ways in which this might be accomplished.

Moses 7:19-21, 69. In time, the Lord translated the City and its people.

Moses 7:28-33, 36-37 gives us insight into the Lord's feelings as he watches his children choose sin and reap the consequences thereof.

Moses 7:41, 44-47 record that Enoch also wept over the people, but he was comforted by the Lord. Future lessons will discuss the reestablishment of Zion in the latter days, the Second Coming, and the Millennium that were seen in Enoch's vision.

Cain chose to follow Satan and teach his evil practices to his children and followers. Consequently, Cain's descendants increased in their wickedness and God cursed them for their unrighteousness. Enoch, on the other hand, chose the way of the Lord in his life. Enoch's choice to be obedient and spread the gospel to anyone who would listen and accept the teachings allowed an entire city to become so righteous that they were taken from the earth to dwell with God.

Attitudes that lead us to God or Attitudes that lead us to destruction

Enoch's attitudes and the consequences: **Moses 7:59; 6:31; 6:43; 6:39; 7:44; 7:18** (=Dwell with God).

Cain's attitudes and the consequences: **Moses 5:16, 5:25; 5:34; 5:33; 5:31; 5:41** (=Spiritual destruction)

Despite the teachings of their parents, some children choose not to live in righteousness

Elder Richard G. Scott counseled: "*Many of you have heavy hearts because a son or daughter, husband or wife, has turned from righteousness to pursue evil. My message is for you. Your life is filled with anguish, pain, and, at times, despair. I will tell you how you can be comforted by the Lord. First, you must recognize two foundation principles: 1) While there are many things you can do to help a loved one in need, there are some things that must be done by the Lord. 2) Also, no enduring improvement can occur without righteous exercise of agency. Do not attempt to override agency. The Lord himself would not do that. Forced obedience yields no blessings (see D&C 58:26-33). I will suggest seven ways you can help. First, love without limitations. ...Second, do not condone the transgressions, but extend every hope and support to the transgressor...Third, teach truth...Fourth, honestly forgive as often as is required...Fifth, pray trustingly, 'The...fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much' (James 5:16) ...Sixth, keep perspective...When the things you realistically can do to help are done, leave the matter in the hands of the Lord and worry no more. Do not feel guilty because you cannot do more. Do not waste your energy on useless worry...In time, you will feel impressions and know how to give further help. You will find more peace and happiness, will not neglect others that need you, and will be able to give greater help because of that eternal perspective... One last suggestion—Never give up on a loved one, never!*" (Ensign, May 1988, 60-61.)

“Noah...Prepared an Ark to the Saving of His House”

Lesson 6 - Moses 8:19-30; Genesis 6-9; 11:1-9

Just as Noah, we should live worthily and reject the evils of the world.

Noah’s call to repentance was rejected by the people; Noah built an ark

Moses 8:20-22 describes the condition of the world when Noah was called to preach repentance. Just as the people of Noah’s day, some in the world today refuse to hearken to prophets’ warnings, they are prideful, and some fit the description that “*every man was lifted up in the imagination of the thoughts of his heart, being only evil continually*”.

Moses 8:23-24 tells how the people in Noah’s day could have avoided destruction. In our day, those who have chosen evil have the choice to hearken to the prophet or suffer a similar fate to those of Noah’s day—physical and spiritual destruction.

Noah built the ark to “the saving of his house”. Today, our leaders have counseled each of us to build a “personal ark”. While many of us believe that we should do so, procrastination overcomes some and necessary spiritual and temporal preparations are left undone.

Temporal preparations

President Ezra Taft Benson said, “*The revelation to produce and store food may be as essential to our temporal welfare today as boarding the ark was to the people in the days of Noah*” (Ensign, Nov. 1987, 49).

Elder W. Don Ladd taught: “*When it starts raining, it is too late to begin building the ark... We... need to listen to the Lord’s spokesmen. We need to calmly continue to move ahead and prepare for what will surely come. We need not panic or fear, for if we are prepared, spiritually and temporally, we and our families will survive any flood. Our arks will float on a sea of faith if our works have been steadily and surely preparing for the future*” (Ensign, Nov. 1994, 29).

Qualities that Noah demonstrated in building the ark included faith, obedience, diligence, and hard work. We would do well to strengthen these qualities in ourselves so that we too are prepared to avoid temporal and spiritual destruction.

President Spencer W. Kimball explained that when Noah built the ark, “*there was no evidence of rain or flood... His warnings were considered irrational... How foolish to build an ark on dry ground with the sun shining and life moving forward as usual! But time ran out. The ark was finished. The floods came. The disobedient and rebellious were drowned. The miracle of the ark followed the faith manifested in its building*” (Faith Precedes the Miracle [1972], 5-6).

The Lord cleansed the earth with a flood

Genesis 7:23 confirms that all life on the face of the earth, except for those in the ark, was destroyed by the floodwaters.

What “arks” or instruments of salvation might we have in our lives? They could include: our homes, our families, friends, temples, seminary, Church meetings, prayer, the scriptures, and the living prophets. If these are possible “arks” for us, think of what we might do to extend these saving instruments to others who could find refuge with us.

Noah sent a dove out three times after the rains ended. **Genesis 8:8-11** record the events.

Genesis 8:20 - Having just passed through a very difficult period, Noah’s first recorded act after leaving the ark was to thank the Lord. We should follow his example and, when we have been aided by the Lord through a difficult situation, we should immediately offer appropriate thanks.

Genesis 9:12-13, 16-17 teaches that a covenant was established between God and Noah and the rainbow became a symbol of that sacred covenant. That covenant is stated in **Genesis 9:11**.

Another reason for the Flood

In reflecting on the Flood, we should consider the words of President John Taylor, who pointed out that in addition to rendering a just judgment on the wicked of Noah's time, the Lord had another reason for sending the flood. He said, "...as men began to increase upon the earth, so wickedness increased until it was decided that they should be destroyed, that they might be deprived of the privilege of perpetuating their species. Why? Let us go back to the time when Satan rebelled against the Almighty and drew away one-third of the hosts of heaven. We find that there were pure spirits that stood the test and who had given to them the promise of bodies on this earth. Let us suppose that you and I were there as spirits awaiting the privilege of taking bodies, and that we could see the wickedness and corruption that was going on upon the earth, and that we could see Prophets going about teaching the principles of righteousness and warning the people of judgment that should come, of the flood that should overwhelm them and of the prisons prepared in which the ungodly should be cast. And we say, "Father, you see the people on the earth that they are wicked and depraved, fallen and corrupt?" "Yes." "Is it right and just that we who have done no wrong should have to enter into such corrupt bodies and partake of the influences with which they are surrounded?" "No," says the Father, "it is not just, and I will cut them off, I will cause the floods to come upon them to destroy them, and I will send those wicked and disobedient spirits into prison," which he did. Here was an act of justice. Some men who profess to be very wise, think that God was unjust in this destroying so many of his creatures. They know nothing about it because they do not comprehend the law of God and the purposes of God. It was an act of justice and righteousness according to the eternal justice that dwells in the bosom of the Father." (*Journal of Discourses*, XXII, pp. 301-302).

Destiny of those who perished in the Flood

"[In Moses 7:37-39,] ...the Lord declares that the sins of those who perished in the Flood would be upon the heads of their fathers, for they had turned from the Gospel and built up the corrupt practices by which their children were overcome. Consequently, those who perished in the flood were not as responsible for their plight as their fathers. Though they were overcome by the world and thus rejected the Gospel, the fact should be kept in mind that they did not build up the system of corruption to which they succumbed. In the final analysis, therefore, their condemnation would be less than that pronounced upon their fathers. Their fathers were consigned to hell, but those who perished in the flood were placed in spirit prison—a place of lesser condemnation in hell."

*"...Though they were not responsible for building up wicked practices in the world, they did not have faith to overcome the world and be sanctified by the truth and power of the Gospel while in the flesh. Thus they failed to prepare themselves for celestial glory." (Hyrum L. Andrus, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price*, [1967], 397, 399)*

The people built the tower of Babel. Genesis 11:1-9.

Genesis 11:4 - In a vain attempt to make a name for themselves, the people decided to build a city and a tower. The tower would reach to heaven. Of course, as Latter-day Saints, we know that making a name for ourselves is not important, but taking upon ourselves the name of Christ is essential to our salvation and exaltation.

Genesis 11:5-9 – as a result of their iniquity and pride, the Lord confounded the people's language and scattered them across the face of the earth. The lesson we can learn from this episode is that we must endeavor to reach heaven in the manner the Lord has designated—not by devising the path ourselves, but by diligently, faithfully following the path trod by our Savior. The people who were punished had tried to reach heaven by worldly means. The people who were saved during the flood were saved because they followed the Spirit's guidance.

“The Abrahamic Covenant”

Lesson 7 - Abraham 1:1-4; 2:1-11; Genesis 12:1-8; 17:1-9

Introduction

What is a patriarchal blessing? The First Presidency said: “*Patriarchal blessings [are] an inspired declaration of the lineage of the recipient, and also, where so moved upon the Spirit, an inspired and prophetic statement of the life mission of the recipient, together with such blessings, cautions, and admonitions as the patriarch may be prompted to give....The realization of all promised blessings is conditioned upon faithfulness to the gospel of our Lord*” (letter to stake presidents, 28 June 1957; quoted in Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 558).

Have you received your patriarchal blessing? One of the declarations made in a patriarchal blessing is your lineage. When that lineage is declared, we know that we are descendants of the prophet Abraham through Ephraim, Manasseh, or another of Abraham’s lines. In this lesson, we will review many of the blessings that we may be eligible to receive and the responsibilities that we bear as descendants of Abraham and participants in the Abrahamic Covenant.

The Covenant between God and Abraham

Abraham 1:2-4. As a young man, Abraham wanted to be obedient and worthy before God. Blessings he sought included ordination in the priesthood, great knowledge, an increased ability to follow righteousness, to be a father of many nations, to be a prince of peace, to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God.

Abraham 2:1-4 show that Abraham was directed to leave the family home in Ur and journey to Haran, where he was to settle. Being obedient to that instruction, he then prayed for further guidance and beheld a vision. In the vision, God covenanted to bless Abraham and his posterity. The covenant is known as the *Abrahamic Covenant*. It should be noted that not all of the blessings were to be bestowed immediately. In fact, many were years in their fulfillment and some are being fulfilled today.

The following scriptural passages record the blessings promised in the covenant.

Earthly Blessings include:

- **Abraham 2:6, 19; Genesis 12:7; 17:8** - A promised land to live in
- **Abraham 2:9-10; Genesis 12:2-3; 17:2, 4-6** - A great posterity
- **Abraham 2:9-11; Genesis 17:7** – The gospel of Jesus Christ and the priesthood for Abraham and his posterity

Eternal Parallels include:

- **D&C 88:17-20** – The celestial kingdom
- **D&C 132:19-22** – Eternal Marriage and eternal increase
- **D&C 132:23-24** – Exaltation and eternal life

We are heirs to the Abrahamic covenant—both blessings and responsibilities

We are privileged to know that all members of the Church are included in the “seed of Abraham”. We are indeed his descendants. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith said: “*The great majority of those who become members of the Church are literal descendants of Abraham through Ephraim, son of Joseph. Those who are not literal descendants of Abraham and Israel must become such, and when they are baptized and confirmed they are grafted into the tree and are entitled at all the rights and privileges as heirs*” (*Improvement Era*, Oct. 1923, 1149).

Church members, as the seed of Abraham, are heirs to both the blessings and the responsibilities of the Abrahamic covenant. When we are baptized into the Church, the Abrahamic covenant’s promise of salvation is renewed with us. When we are sealed in the temple, the Abrahamic covenant’s promise of exaltation is renewed with us. To receive the blessings of the covenant, we must fulfill the associated responsibilities and live worthily.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained: “*Abraham first received the gospel by baptism (which is the covenant of salvation); then he had conferred upon him the higher priesthood, and he entered into celestial marriage (which is the covenant of exaltation), gaining assurance thereby that he would have eternal increase; finally he received a*

promise that all of these blessings would be offered to all of his mortal posterity. (Abra. 2:6-11; D&C 132:29-50.) Included in the divine promises to Abraham was the assurance that Christ would come through his lineage, and the assurance that Abraham's posterity would receive certain choice, promised lands as an eternal inheritance. (Abra. 2; Gen. 17; 22:15-18; Gal. 3) All of these promises lumped together are called the Abrahamic covenant. This covenant was renewed with Isaac (Gen. 24:60; 26:1-4, 24) and again with Jacob (Gen 28; 35:9-13; 48:3-4.) Those portions of it which pertain to personal exaltation and eternal increase are renewed with each member of the house of Israel who enters the order of celestial marriage; through that order the participating parties become inheritors of all the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (D&C 132; Rom. 9:4; Gal. 3: 4.) (Mormon Doctrine, 2nd ed. [1966], 13).

As members, the blessings we can receive through the covenant include the gospel, the priesthood, exaltation, and eternal family relationships.

Responsibilities, which we agree to assume through the Abrahamic covenant, include:

- **Abraham 2:9, 11** – We must assist all of God's children in receiving the full blessings of the gospel.
- **Genesis 18:19** – We must be obedient to God's commandments.

The first responsibility is accomplished by participating actively in the missionary work—both formally by interacting with and supporting the full-time missionaries as well as informally by being a member missionary who prays for and takes advantage of personal missionary opportunities, by performing temple ordinances for the dead, and by being examples of righteous living in our neighborhoods and communities.

President Ezra Taft Benson said, *“The responsibility of the seed of Abraham, which we are, is to be missionaries to ‘bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations’ (Abraham 2:9)” (Ensign, May 1987, 85).*

Elder Boyd K. Packer made the following analogy to emphasize our responsibility to share the gospel with others: *“Imagine that our bishop has appointed us to plan a picnic for ward members. It is to be the best social in the history of the ward, and we are to spare no expense. We reserve a beautiful picnic ground in the country. We are to have it all to ourselves.*

“The day arrives and everything is perfect. The tables are set and the feast is spectacular. Then, just as the blessing is being said, an old car turns into the picnic grounds and sputters to a stop. A worried man lifts the hood, and a spout of steam comes out. Several children climb out of the car. An anxious mother takes a box to a nearby table. She puts a few leftovers on the table, trying to make them look like a meal for her hungry children. But there is not enough.

“Then one of the little girls sees our table. She pulls her little brother over to us and pushes her head between you and me. We move aside. The little girl says ‘Look at that; I wonder what that tastes like.’”

What would we do? Would we ignore the people or ask them to be quiet? Would we show them back to their table and give them some of the food we really don't need? Or would we invite them to come and join us, to sit between us and share the feast, and to let us help fix their car and give them something for their journey?

“Could there be more pure enjoyment than seeing how much we could get those hungry children to eat? Could there be more satisfaction than to interrupt our festivities to help [them] fix their car? ...

“...There are people across the world and about us—our neighbors, our friends, some in our own families—who, spiritually speaking, are undernourished. Some of them are starving to death! If we keep all this to ourselves, it is not unlike feasting before those who are hungry” (Ensign, May 1984, 41-42).

Elder Packer's analogy teaches about our responsibility to help others receive the blessings of the gospel. We have been blessed with the fullness of the gospel, the greatest feast the world has ever known [D&C 58:8-12]. God expects us to share this blessing with others, both living and dead.

The declaration of lineage in our patriarchal blessings as descendants of Abraham is like a call to fulfill our responsibilities as heirs of the covenant. The patriarchal blessing also reemphasizes our privilege to receive the blessings of the covenant.

Just as the ancient people of the covenant were placed in the middle of the ancient world, we are not separated, but are placed in the center of the modern world so that we may set an example and have ample opportunity to be a righteous influence on the world. We must work diligently to fulfill our covenant to bless all the nations by sharing the gospel covenant with them.

“Living Righteously in a Wicked World”

Lesson 8 - Genesis 13-14; 18-19

This lesson reminds us that although wickedness surrounds us, we must be righteous.

Background on Abraham’s Travels: Abraham was raised in Ur of Chaldea before being led by the Lord to settle in Haran. The Lord later led him from Haran to the land of Canaan (Palestine or the part of it between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea) and promised. *“Unto thy seed will I give this land”* (Genesis 12:7). Famine in Canaan prompted Abraham and his family to migrate to Egypt (Genesis 10:10). At the beginning of Genesis 13, Abraham and his family return to Canaan from Egypt.

Abraham settled his family in Hebron; Lot and his family settled near Sodom.

Genesis 13: 5-9. Prosperity—abundant flocks and herds—made it difficult for Lot and Abraham to live in the same area, so Abraham gave Lot the choice when it was decided that they must separate to avoid conflict between their herdsmen or themselves over the land. Here, we have an example of how to resolve conflicts with family members or others.

Genesis 13:10-13 tell us that Lot chose to settle in the cities on the plain and pitched his tent toward Sodom, even though the people of Sodom were exceedingly wicked. He seems to have chosen the spot because it was like a well-watered garden. Later, Lot chose to move into the city of Sodom. Just as Lot decided to locate himself in an evil environment, we too may choose to associate ourselves with evil rather than shunning it. We may begin by becoming guilty of small sins without realizing or acknowledging that this may lead to large, more grievous sins. Before that happens and we graduate to the larger sins, we need to change our behavior and/or our environment to remove the temptations and the opportunity to choose evil over righteousness.

In contrast to Lot, the people of King Benjamin in the Book of Mormon chose to pitch their tents in the direction of the Lord’s house—the temple (Mosiah 2:6). As Latter-day Saints, we need to assure that our homes are properly positioned toward holy rather than worldly places.

Abraham rescued Lot, paid tithing, and refused to accept the spoils of war

Genesis 14:1-2, 8-9 – nine kings and their followers began to war among themselves while Lot resided in Sodom.

Genesis 14:10-12 – In Sodom, Lot was taken captive after all of his goods were taken during a successful invasion by the soldiers of the enemies of Sodom.

Genesis 14:13-16 – When alerted to Lot’s kidnapping, Abraham took his 318 followers and pursued the enemy until he was able to overtake them, smite them, and drive them off into Jordan. Lot was rescued along with his goods.

Genesis 14:17-18 – Welcomed by the kings after his victory, Abraham met and was blessed by Melchizedek, king of Salem and *“the priest of the most high God”*.

Genesis 14:20 (JST 14:36-40) – It is recorded here that Abraham paid his tithing to Melchizedek.

Genesis 14:21-24 – Rather than have it said that the king of Sodom had rewarded him, Abraham refused to take the recaptured goods that were offered to him for his service. He utterly refused to take anything—even a thread—from the wicked king. This is an example of extreme righteousness that should cause us to think about our actions in our day. Do we accept a “thread” of immorality? A “thread” of dishonesty? Do we sometimes accept a certain amount of unrighteousness in our entertainment choices rather than forego the viewing of a movie or TV program? What is the level of compromise that we are willing to accept? Abraham was unwilling to compromise at all—not even a little. It tells us a great deal about Abraham when we see that he was anxious to pay tithes to Melchizedek, who represented the Lord, while he was absolutely opposed to accepting any riches from the unrighteous king of Sodom.

Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by the Lord

Genesis 18:20-21. Seeing the iniquity that had taken hold in Sodom and Gomorrah, the Lord decided to destroy the cities.

Genesis 18:23-32. Being disturbed that some righteous ones might be destroyed along with the wicked, Abraham proceeded to bargain with the Lord to spare the cities if at least 10 righteous could be found. He had bargained down from 50, through 45, 40, 30, and 20 to arrive at 10.

Genesis 19: 12-13, 15 records that the “holy men” told Lot to leave Sodom because it was about to be destroyed.

Genesis 19:14 makes us ask why someone, Lot’s sons-in-law, would reject the warning and chose to stay among the wicked even when a promise of imminent destruction is pronounced.

Genesis 19:17 –Lot and his family were counseled not to look back as they fled to the mountain. The Lord gave similar counsel in Luke and the D&C. He wanted his disciples to understand that “*looking back*” demonstrates either a reluctance to sacrifice that which is asked of us, or a lack of complete commitment to following the Savior and his teachings. *In class, you may wish to suggest some ways that we might “look back”.*

Genesis 19:26 – Lot’s wife, lagging back and looking back toward Sodom, paid a high price. We learn from this that sometimes when we need to repent and change our lives, we may need a fresh start—a new place, new surroundings, an improved environment, and new associates.

Lot “pitched his tent toward Sodom”. He put himself in an environment of temptation. Surrounded by evil, he was tempted just as we would be if we allowed ourselves to be surrounded by wicked influences. Even if we do not succumb to the enticements and actively participate in the prevalent sins, we become polluted from such an environment.

Genesis 19:29 indicates that Lot was spared because he was Abraham’s son. We too can have a saving effect on those around us when we chose righteousness and obedience to the Lord.

President Spencer W. Kimball said: “*Our world is now much the same as it was in the days of the Nephite prophet who said: ‘...if it were not for the prayers of the righteous...ye would even now be visited with utter destruction...’ (Alma 10:22.) Of course, there are many many upright and faithful who live all the commandments and whose lives and prayers keep the world from destruction” (Ensign, June 1971, 16).*

The people of Sodom and Gomorrah were guilty of grievous sexual sins, but those sins were not the only sins that contributed to the destruction of those cities. Other sins of the people included pride, fullness of bread (gluttony), abundant idleness, selfishness and lack of charity, and arrogance. (See Ezekiel 16:49-50). From this we should realize that seemingly small sins can destroy us just as surely as large ones.

Conclusion

Elder Russell M. Ballard: “*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... Members of the Church need to influence more than we are influenced. We should work to stem the tide of sin and evil instead of passively being swept along by it. We each need to help solve the problem rather than avoid or ignore it” (Ensign, May 1989, 80).*

“God Will Provide Himself a Lamb”

Lesson 9 - Abraham 1; Genesis 15-17; 21-22

Think about what you would do if God asked you to give up, or sacrifice, someone you truly love or something that you value very highly. How would you respond? This lesson will help us improve our understanding of Heavenly Father’s sacrifice of his Only Begotten Son as we learn of Abraham’s willingness to be obedient when he was commanded to sacrifice Isaac. Because of Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his beloved son, he and his posterity were greatly blessed.

Abraham and the false priests of Pharaoh Abraham 1:1, 5-20.

To understand fully the revulsion that Abraham must have felt when confronted with ritual human sacrifice, we need to briefly review his personal experience as a young man when he was almost sacrificed by a false priest of Pharaoh.

Abraham 1:1, 5-8 tells of his fathers (ancestors) conversion to idol worship and human sacrifice. **Abraham 1:7, 12** reveal that Abraham was threatened as the priests sought to take his life.

Abraham 1:15-16, 20 recounts that God not only loosed Abraham’s bands in answer to his prayer, but he also broke down the altar of the false priests in Chaldea and utterly destroyed them. Abraham was then led out of that land.

This experience gave Abraham the opportunity to strengthen his testimony that the Lord would protect him in all circumstances as long as Abraham demonstrated obedience and maintained faith in the Lord. It was a dramatic preparation for Abraham’s future trials.

Abraham’s posterity through Hagar and Sarah Genesis 15-17; 21

Genesis 15:1-6 reveals that Abraham was promised a vast posterity that would be as numerous as the stars in the heavens.

Genesis 16:1-3; D&C 132:34-35 – Sarah gave Hagar, her Egyptian handmaid, to Abraham so that he might have seed. In the D&C, we find that this arrangement was a result of the Lord’s command.

Genesis 16:10-11 – Hagar was promised that her seed would be multiplied and she was told that her child would be a male whose name should be Ishmael.

Genesis 17:15-16, 19, 21 – Here, Sarai is renamed Sarah and receives the promise that many nations will come of her son. The child was to be named Isaac and the covenant between the Lord and Abraham would be the birthright of Isaac.

Genesis 17:17 – Note that while the King James version uses the word “*laughed*” in describing Abraham’s reaction to the news of his wife’s conception, the Joseph Smith Translation uses “*rejoiced*” –the more correct rendering of his reaction.

The revelation that Abraham and Sarah would have a son teaches us that God fulfills his promises. That is true although God does not necessarily fulfill promises in the way or at the time we might expect. Promised blessings only came after years of faithful waiting by Abraham and Sarah. We need to remain faithful while we wait for promised blessings that will come!

Genesis 17:19-21 – note that the promises made regarding Isaac were different than those given regarding Ishmael. Ishmael would have a numerous posterity and father a great nation, but Isaac’s blessings were for a numerous posterity that would bear the responsibility of the Abrahamic covenant and the opportunity for unlimited blessings as that covenant was fulfilled.

God’s command to Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac Genesis 22

Learning from Trials

Truman Madsen wrote that while he and President Hugh B. Brown were together in the valley of Hebron where tradition has it that there is a tomb to father Abraham, he asked President Brown, “...” *‘What are the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?’ Elder Brown thought a moment and answered in one word, ‘Posterity.’ Then Bro. Madsen said he almost burst out, ‘Why, then, was Abraham commanded to go to Mount Moriah and offer his only hope of posterity?’ It was clear that this man, nearly*

ninety, had thought and prayed and wept over that question before. He finally said, 'Abraham needed to learn something about Abraham'." (Truman G. Madsen, *The Highest in Us* [1978], 49).

D&C 101:4 - The Lord has revealed that we must be tried "even as Abraham".

D&C 101:5, 35-38; 122:5-7 – informs us that trials are necessary since we must be willing to endure chastening, suffer persecution for [the Lord's] name, endure in faith, lay down our lives if necessary, care not for the body, care only for the soul, seek eternal life, pass through tribulation, be falsely accused, be torn from our families, and face the gaping jaws of hell. To be prepared for such trials, we have to build an undeniable testimony and live according to that testimony.

Genesis 22:2-3 – Abraham responds to the Lord's command to sacrifice Isaac.

James 2:20-23 – Abraham is shown to be a dramatic example of faith and works.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained Isaac's response to the situation: "*When they came to the prescribed place, Abraham built an altar and laid wood upon it. Then, the Bible says, 'Abraham ...bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood' (Genesis 22:9). What did Isaac think when Abraham did such a strange thing? The Bible mentions no struggle or objection. Isaac's silence can be explained only in terms of his trust in and obedience to his father*" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 37).

Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac was a similitude of Heavenly Father's willingness to sacrifice his Only Begotten Son (Jacob 4:5; Genesis 22:8, 13). **In class, please suggest some ways in which Abraham's and Heavenly Father's experiences were similar; then how they were different.**

Elder Dallin H. Oaks said: "*This story...shows the goodness of God in protecting Isaac and in providing a substitute so he would not have to die. Because of our sins and our mortality, we, like Isaac, are condemned to death. When all other hope is gone, our Father in Heaven provides the Lamb of God, and we are saved by his sacrifice*" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 37).

Genesis 22:11-12 – Abraham proved his respect for, faith in, and devotion to God by his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, the son of the covenant.

While perhaps the most dramatic, this is not the only story in the scriptures where an individual has been tested as an opportunity to prove his faithfulness. Imagine the joy and blessing of peace that must come after successfully passing such a test.

Genesis 22:15-18 promises Abraham innumerable seed (eternal increase) and the opportunity for his seed to bless all the nations of the earth (by carrying the gospel to them through the priesthood).

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President Spencer W. Kimball urged all to follow the example of Abraham:

"If parents would seek the blessings Abraham sought, they could also receive such revelation, covenants, promises, and eternal rewards as Abraham received..."

"Remember that Abraham sought for his appointment to the priesthood. He did not wait for God to come to him; he sought diligently through prayer and obedient living to learn the will of God. Here then, is the challenge the Lord gives every returned missionary, every single man and woman, every father and mother in the Church: 'Go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abraham' (D&C 132:32).

*"As we follow Abraham's example, we will grow from grace to grace, we will find greater happiness and peace and rest, we will find favor with God and with man. As we follow his example, we will confirm upon ourselves and our families joy and fulfillment in this life and for all eternity" (*Ensign*, June 1975, 7).*

“Birthright Blessings; Marriage in the Covenant”

Lesson 10 - Genesis 24-29

Introduction

Think about it—if you had to choose between a bowl of popcorn (or a piece of fruit) now or, an unlimited supply of popcorn (or fruit) later, after you had planted, cultivated, nourished, and harvested the kernels (or fruit), which would you choose? The choice between things we can have now versus things that we have to work and wait for is common in daily life. Immediate satisfaction...instant gratification...or greater blessings at a later time? Choices for snacks are not important, but other choices such as whom and when to marry are extremely important and will determine what blessings we receive in later years or in the eternities. Our choices affect both temporal and spiritual conditions and we should choose righteously and with great care.

Abraham emphasized marriage in the covenant

Although Abraham and his family lived in the land of the Canaanites, Abraham was insistent that Isaac chose a bride from his kindred rather than a Canaanite woman. Isaac was the son of the covenant—the one through whom the birthright blessings would pass—so Abraham wanted his son to marry one of his own faith and beliefs. Today, it remains important that we marry in the covenant (meaning eternal or temple marriage) if we want our children to enjoy the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant that we are heirs to as members of the Church.

Marriage in the covenant has been a commandment of God in all ages—whenever the gospel has been on the earth—because it is an eternal ordinance and the family unit was always intended to last for eternity. Adam and Eve set the example as they entered into eternal marriage. *“Till death do you part”* was never a part of their wedding vows.

Abraham sent a servant to find a suitable wife for Isaac. (Note: Since the people of Melchizedek were a short journey away, one might expect Isaac to obtain a worthy wife among them, but they had been translated, so the opportunity was not available.) The servant was an impressive individual, who, even after a long journey, would not eat until he had finished his errand for Abraham. We can see from Genesis 24 that he was trustworthy, loyal, prayerful, and faithful. Rather than remain there for a ten-day celebration, the servant wished to take Rebekah to Abraham quickly.

Genesis 24:15-20, 58. Abraham’s servant knew that his prayer for direction had been answered when he spoke with Rebekah. Rebekah showed herself to be kind and willing to help strangers. It was no small task to water the ten camels, since a camel can consume up to 30 gallons a day. Rebekah’s great faith was shown in her willingness to leave her home to marry her second cousin, Isaac.

Application

There are certain qualities that are desirable in a husband or wife. The more important qualities will be spiritual rather than physical. (In class we will open the subject for discussion and your insight.) Of course, if potential mates are looking for certain spiritual qualities, we should endeavor to develop such qualities—regardless of whether we are already married or not.

Preparing for eternal marriage begins early. We should teach our children, at appropriate times, what they can do to prepare for marriage in the covenant. President Howard W. Hunter said: *“Let us plan for and teach and plead with our children to marry in the house of the Lord. Let us reaffirm more vigorously than we have in the past that it does matter where you marry and by what authority you are pronounced man and wife”* (Ensign, 11/94).

Both Isaac and Jacob were instructed by their fathers to marry women of their own faith. Esau brought sorrow to his parents by marrying wives who did not believe in the God of Abraham. President Spencer W. Kimball gave this counsel: *“Paul told the Corinthians, ‘Be ye not unequally yoked together...’ Perhaps Paul wanted them to see that religious differences are fundamental differences. Religious differences imply wider areas of conflict. Church loyalties and family loyalties clash. Children’s lives are often frustrated. The nonmember may be equally brilliant, well trained and attractive, and he or she may have the most pleasing personality, but without a common faith, trouble lies ahead for the marriage. There are some exceptions but the rule is a harsh and unhappy one.”* He continued: *“Clearly, right marriage begins with right dating. A person generally marries someone from among those with whom he ...socializes. Therefore, this warning comes with great emphasis. Do not take the chance of dating non-members, or members who are untrained and faithless.”* (The Miracle of Forgiveness [1969], 240-242).

Esau sold his birthright to Jacob Genesis 25:20-34

Genesis 25:22-23 records that Rebekah received a revelation about her yet unborn twin sons. Concerning Rebekah's prayer, Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: "*May I now take our common ancestor, Rebekah, as a pattern for what her daughters in the Church today can do? ...when Rebekah was troubled and needed divine guidance she herself took the matter up with the Lord, and he spoke to her in reply. The Lord gives revelation to women who pray to him in faith*" (Conference Report, Tahiti Area Conference 1976, 16). While the birthright usually passed from father to eldest son, the Lord revealed to Rebekah that Esau would serve Jacob. The birthright included a double share of the family wealth as compensation for serving as the patriarch and assuming the responsibility for support of the father's widow and daughters. Jacob's reception of the birthright meant that his descendants would be the covenant people rather than Esau's posterity.

Genesis 25:29-34 show Esau's feelings about his birthright. It is obvious that he placed little value on the birthright since he was willing to sell it cheaply to satisfy a temporary physical need.

Application

As members of the Church, we have a spiritual birthright from our heavenly parents. Blessings included in that birthright include the priesthood, opportunity for temple blessings, availability of the ordinances, revelation, and the potential for exaltation in the celestial kingdom.

The spiritual birthright blessings are affected by our choice of a marriage partner. If we choose to marry in the covenant, we receive temple ordinances that allow us to receive the blessings associated with the Abrahamic covenant. If we chose a civil marriage only, we limit our right to receive such blessings.

Our words and actions also show what value we place on our birthright. We, like Esau, can put temporary needs ahead of eternal values if we are careless or worldly.

Heirs to the covenant were chosen by the Lord. He favored Isaac over Ishmael (Gal. 4:22-23), Jacob over Esau, Joseph over Reuben (1 Chronicles 5:1-2), and Ephraim over Manasseh (Genesis 48:17-20). This suggests to us that there are qualifications that supersede birth order in the opportunity for callings and blessings in the Lord's plan.

Jacob married Leah and Rachel in the covenant and continued the Abrahamic covenant

Genesis 26:34-35; 28:6-9 gives us some insight into Esau's choice of wives.

Genesis 28:1-5; 29:1-28 indicates that Jacob was willing to go to great lengths to marry in the covenant. He made a long journey to find a faithful woman to marry. He then worked for Laban for seven years before marrying Rachel and he continued to work for him afterward.

Conclusion

President Gordon B. Hinckley told of a family who joined the Church in Australia and then sold all their possessions so they could travel to New Zealand and be sealed as a family. The father of this family said: "*We could not afford to come [to the temple]. Our worldly possessions consisted of our car, our furniture, and our dishes. I said to my family, 'We cannot afford not to go. If the Lord will give me strength, I can work and earn enough for another car and furniture and dishes, but if I should lose these my loved ones, I would be poor indeed in both life and in eternity'*" (*Be Thou an Example* [1981], 138).

Our challenge is to realize the importance of marrying in the covenant and living worthily so that we may receive the birthright blessings. Wisdom dictates that we should not trade our eternal blessings for temporary pleasure or satisfaction—especially when marriage is the subject.

“How Can I Do This Great Wickedness?”

Lesson 11 - Genesis 34; 37-39

Introduction

Think of some of the movies, TV shows, books, or magazines that are currently popular. What are the standards of morality presented by those media offerings? How do those standards differ from the Lord’s standards? While the moral behavior of society often fails to reach the high standards set by God, the Lord’s standards never change. Today’s lesson reviews the experiences of one man who followed the Lord’s standard of morality and other men who did not.

His brothers sold Joseph into slavery -- (Genesis 37)

Jacob married Leah and Rachel, his cousins, and their handmaids, Zilpah and Bilhah. These four wives were the mothers of the twelve sons who were the beginnings of the twelve tribes of Israel. (As we know, the Lord changed Jacob’s name to Israel. See Genesis 32:28). Jacob’s eleventh son, Joseph, as the eldest son of Jacob and Rachel, received the birthright when Reuben, eldest son of Jacob and Leah, lost it through unrighteousness (1 Chronicles 5:1-2).

Genesis 37:3-8 reveals that Joseph’s brothers were jealous of him because he was his father’s favorite and because he shared a dream he had that indicated that he would rule over his brethren.

Genesis 37:13-14 - When Joseph was asked by Jacob to check on the welfare of his brothers and their flocks in Shechem, 45 miles away, he replied without hesitation that he would do so.

Genesis 37:15-17 – His brothers had moved their flocks to Dothan, another 12 miles further, but Joseph journeyed on without complaint. From this account, we learn that Joseph was obedient and persistent in doing his father’s will.

Genesis 37:18-20 tells us that his brothers conspired to slay Joseph as he approached them. But, upon further discussion, they were persuaded by Reuben not to take Joseph’s life. Instead, they sold him to passing Midianites as a slave.

Genesis 37:28, 31-34 reveal what they did to deceive their father about Joseph’s disappearance.

Joseph refused to “sin against God” (Genesis 39)

Genesis 39:1-4 records how Joseph was blessed by the Lord after being sold as a slave.

Genesis 39:5-6 teaches that as Joseph remained faithful to the Lord, he was blessed with a great ability to serve his master, Potiphar, a wealthy officer of Pharaoh. Potiphar’s wealth increased as a result of the Lord blessing him through Joseph’s stewardship.

Genesis 39:11-12 – When tempted by Potiphar’s wife to commit sexual sin, Joseph fled rather than comply with her worldly wishes. As we should know from this example, we too should immediately flee from the presence of temptation rather than succumb to it. Of course, if he had wanted to give in to the advances of Potiphar’s wife, Joseph could have invented and used numerous excuses. The practice of making excuses to justify sexual sins is commonplace today. We see it constantly in the “entertainment” media. But the Lord gives no merit to any excuses or worldly justifications for indulging in sexual immorality.

Genesis 39:12-20. The lies and false accusations of Potiphar’s wicked wife resulted in Potiphar’s imprisonment of Joseph because he thought Joseph had tried to assault his wife. So, he went from being the trusted overseer of the estate to a lowly prisoner as a result of his virtue. In today’s world, the virtuous are sometimes ridiculed and excluded from social activities, but often they are respected for their wholesome values and righteous behavior. Of course, the greatest pressure to engage in immorality is on our youth—and unfortunately, too many of them fail when put to the test.

Genesis 39:21-23 emphasizes that while Joseph was imprisoned, the Lord was with him. This assures us that Joseph continued in righteousness instead of blaming God for his problems since he was only following the Lord’s commandments. Because of his faith and sincere desire to follow the Lord no matter what the cost, Joseph’s bad circumstances were turned into good ones.

Elder Hartman Rector Jr. explained: “*[The] ability to turn everything into something good appears to be a godly characteristic. Our Heavenly Father always seems to be able to do this. Everything, no matter how dire, becomes a victory to the Lord. Joseph, although a slave and wholly undeserving of this fate, nevertheless*

remained faithful to the Lord and continued to live the commandments and made something very good of his degrading circumstances. People like this cannot be defeated” (Ensign, Jan. 1973, 130).

Shechem, Reuben, and Judah committed serious moral sins

While Joseph was valiant in the face of temptation, not all of his family and acquaintances were so valiant. Shechem (with Dinah), Reuben (with Bilhah), and Judah (with Tamar) failed the test of sexual temptations. (Genesis 34:1-12; 35:22; 38:1-30).

Genesis 34:3 describes Shechem’s feelings for Dinah, but if he had truly loved her, he would not have defiled her. People’s excuse that “We are in love” as a justification for immoral behavior doesn’t ring true. People in love don’t cause each other to sin and suffer guilt just to satisfy physical desires. Behavior that makes it hard for people to pray, makes them unworthy for entrance to the temple, and breaks up families is not motivated by love.

Genesis 49:3-4 compliments Reuben’s good attributes, but Jacob’s blessing condemns Reuben for his moral sins. He was judged to be “*unstable as water*”. Just as his sins cost him dearly, the spiritual and temporal consequences of sexual sin today are serious in the sight of the Lord. The Lord places great importance on being morally clean.

Bethel – the house of God

Genesis 28:10-19 is the story of “Jacob’s ladder” that reached up to heaven. Jacob named the place Bethel, which means “house of God”. Today that name refers to the temple—the house of God. Elder Marion G. Romney stated, “*Temples are to us all what Bethel was to Jacob*” (Ensign, May, 1971, 16). In preparation for a return to Bethel, Jacob asked his family to make specific preparations—“*Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments.*” (Genesis 35:2). They were to be temporally prepared to go to that sacred place just as we have responsibilities to properly prepare for temple attendance. They took off symbols of their strange gods (rings and earrings, etc.).

Elder Spencer W. Kimball said: “*The Lord has blessed us as a people unequalled in times past. The resources that have been placed in our power are good, and necessary to our work here on the earth. But I am afraid that many of us have been surfeited (supplied to excess) with flocks and herds and acres and barns and wealth and have begun to worship them as false gods, and they have power over us. Do we have more of these good things than our faith can stand? ... In spite of our delight in defining ourselves as modern, and our tendency to think we possess a sophistication that no people in the past ever had—in spite of these things, we are, on the whole, an idolatrous people—a condition most repugnant to the Lord*” (Ensign, June 1976, 4, 6). Have we put away our “strange gods”???

Jacob and Esau were reunited

Returning to Canaan, Jacob expected to meet again with Esau. But according to Genesis 32:11, he was afraid that Esau would smite him. Genesis 32:13-20 details Jacob’s preparations to appease his elder brother with a multitude of presents. When they did meet, Esau was happy to see Jacob and was reluctant to accept the gifts. This serves as an example for us in resolving family conflicts.

Concubines in Old Testament times

Genesis 35:22 refers to Bilhah, one of Rachel’s handmaids, as Jacob’s *concubine*. Elder Bruce R. McConkie provided the following explanation: “*All down through the history of God’s dealings with his people, including those with the house of Israel, concubines were legal wives married to their husbands in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage...Anciently they were considered to be secondary wives, that is, wives who did not have the same standing in the caste system then prevailing as did those wives who were not called concubines*” (Mormon Doctrine, 2nd ed. [1966], 154).

With the Lord’s help, all of our experiences and circumstances can work together for our good.

“Fruitful in the Land of My Affliction”

Lesson 12 - Genesis 40 – 45

Imagine that you have died and entered the spirit world, so you are now reviewing your experiences in mortality. Think specifically about how adversity helped shape your life. What were some of the trials you faced? What lessons did you learn from your trials? If you could relive your mortality, what would you change about how you dealt with trials? How could you have taken better advantage of life’s experiences? This lesson is about how Joseph was faithful and obedient even during great trials.

Joseph interpreted dreams; Joseph was made ruler over all Egypt by the Pharaoh (Gen. 40-41)

As we discussed in the last lesson, Joseph had experienced trials in his early life.

- Genesis 37:4 – He was hated by his brothers.
- Genesis 37:18-28 – His brothers conspired to kill him, and then sold him as a slave instead.
- Genesis 39:20 – He was unjustly imprisoned as refusing to do evil.

Joseph responded to trials by continuing his righteousness and the Lord blessed him for it.

Remember that when a physically free person is in bondage spiritually, he is actually a slave. When a physically enslaved person lives a righteous life, as Joseph did, he is free in a very important respect. Because he was obedient to higher laws, Joseph was free from the consequences of broken law.

After he was joined in prison by the Pharaoh’s butler and baker, Joseph was able to interpret dreams that each of them had. The interpretations were fulfilled within three days.

Genesis 40:14-15. In return for interpreting his dream, Joseph had asked the butler to remember him. But that did not happen.

Genesis 41:1, 9-16 teaches that Joseph was finally given an opportunity for freedom when the Pharaoh wanted an interpretation of his dream. Rather than claim credit for the ability to discern the meaning, Joseph told Pharaoh that God would give the interpretation. Joseph was a model of integrity and used his gifts to glorify God and bless others, not for his own glory.

Genesis 41:1-7, 17-24 describes the dream of Pharaoh.

Genesis 41:25-32 is the interpretation as given by God to Joseph.

Genesis 41:33-36 contains Joseph’s suggestion to Pharaoh.

Genesis 41:37-43 records that the Pharaoh made his wise servant, Joseph, ruler over all Egypt.

Preparing for famine

Just as Joseph gave counsel to Pharaoh about preparing for times of famine, our Church leaders have given us counsel. Elder L. Tom Perry taught: *“Just as it is important to prepare ourselves spiritually, we must also prepare ourselves for our temporal needs... We have been instructed for years to follow at least four requirements in preparing for that which is to come. First, gain an adequate education. Learn a trade or a profession to enable you to obtain steady employment that will provide remuneration sufficient to care for yourself and your family... Second, live strictly within your income and save something for a rainy day. Incorporate in your lives the discipline of budgeting that which the Lord has blessed you with. As regularly as you pay your tithing, set aside an amount needed for future family requirements... Third, avoid excessive debt. Necessary debt should be incurred only after careful, thoughtful prayer and after obtaining the best possible advice. We need the discipline to stay well within our ability to pay... Fourth, acquire and store a reserve of food and supplies that will sustain life [if local laws permit such storage]. Obtain clothing and build a savings account on a sensible, well-planned basis that can serve well in times of emergency. As long as I can remember, we have been taught to prepare for the future and obtain a year’s supply of necessities. I would guess that the years of plenty have almost universally caused us to set aside this counsel. I believe the time to disregard this counsel is over. With events in the world today, it must be considered in all seriousness”* (Ensign, Nov. 1995, 36).

Joseph was reunited with his brothers (Genesis 42-45)

Genesis 42:1-3 – Joseph’s brothers came to Egypt to buy “corn” (this refers to several grains including wheat, barley, rye, beans, and lentils).

Genesis 42:33-34, 43:2 – They needed to return a second time to Egypt.

Genesis 42:36, 38 – Jacob was reluctant to let Benjamin go to Egypt with his brothers.

Genesis 43:3-5, 11-14; 42:36 – Jacob relented and sent Benjamin with his brothers, even though he thought he might lose another son. Even though Jacob viewed this as a trial, the Lord turned this into a blessing since it would lead to Joseph being restored to him.

***Genesis 37:5-11**, which we reviewed before, revealed that Joseph’s brothers would eventually bow down to him. While this was a trial to them at first, it actually became a blessing to them as it led to their temporal salvation.

Genesis 42:21 indicates that, even after 13 years, his brothers still felt guilty about selling Joseph into slavery. Guilt can be a positive force in our lives if it causes us to repent fully and seek complete forgiveness for our past sins. If guilt does not motivate us to repent, but simply causes us to despair, it cannot serve as a positive influence. The choice is up to us.

Genesis 44:18, 30-34 shows that Judah had become kinder and more concerned about his family since that time when he had generated the idea to sell the 17-year old Joseph into slavery.

Genesis 45:1-3 tells us that Joseph’s brothers were troubled when Joseph revealed his identity.

Genesis 45:4-11, 14-15 record Joseph’s complete forgiveness of his brothers and his testimony to them that it was the Lord who had turned this extreme case of sibling rivalry into the salvation of his family during a severe seven-year famine.

D&C 64:8-11 reminds us of the principle of forgiveness that the Lord requires of his followers. As we see, Joseph followed this principle of righteousness. Today, we need to assure that we are indeed ready to obey this principle as it applies to us in our dealings with those who have harmed us. It is up to us to develop a forgiving heart and a charitable spirit toward those who harm us.

***Genesis 45:4-8** (cited above) demonstrated that Joseph’s imprisonment, a trial for him, became a blessing for him, his family, and the entire nation of Egypt. Who knows what far-reaching effect our forgiveness might have on us individually, and on our families.

Romans 8:28 records that the Apostle Paul told the Romans that “*all things work together for good to them that love God*”. Consider how this has been proven true in your life experience.

The great latter-day Joseph

The Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis 50:24-38 contains prophecies that Joseph made about one of his descendants who would become a “*choice seer*.” That descendant is the Prophet of the Restoration, Joseph Smith. The following prophecies were fulfilled in Joseph Smith’s life: 1) JST Genesis 50:26 – One of Joseph’s descendants would be a choice seer, 2) JST Genesis 50:27 - This seer would be greatly respected by the other descendants of Joseph, 3) JST Gen, 50:28 – He would teach them of the covenants that God had made with their ancestors, 4) JST Gen. 50:28 – He would be obedient to God, 5) JST Gen. 50:29 – He would be a great prophet, like Moses, 6) JST Gen. 50:30-31 – he would be the means for bringing forth new scripture (the Book of Mormon) that would support and work with existing scripture (the Bible), 7) JST Gen. 50:32 – Although he would be weak, the Lord would make him strong, 8) JST Gen. 50:33 – Both he and his father would be named Joseph.

Conclusion

Throughout his many trials, Joseph remained faithful. He even forgave his brothers for selling him into slavery. Because of his righteousness, Joseph was greatly blessed. If we are faithful, God will bless us by making all things work together for our good.

Joseph’s sons

Genesis 41:45, 50-52 - After being made ruler over Egypt, Joseph married Asenath, who bore him two sons. The names were appropriate for these sons, Manasseh (“*forgetting*”) and Ephraim (“*fruitful*”). Manasseh, his first son, was a pleasant distraction to aid Joseph in forgetting the thirteen years of slavery and the treachery of his brothers. Regarding Ephraim, Joseph said, “God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.” (Genesis 41:52)

“Bondage, Passover, and Exodus”

Lesson 13 - Exodus 1-3; 5-6; 1-14

Introduction

If you have ever been rescued from a dangerous situation, you will be able to appreciate today’s lesson as we examine one of the most dramatic rescues that has ever occurred—the deliverance of the children of Israel from the plague of death and from Egyptian slavery. This rescue symbolizes the deliverance of man from sin and death through the Savior’s atonement.

The Lord called Moses to deliver Israel from bondage.

Background: After Jacob and his family moved to Egypt, the Israelites lived there for 430 years. During that time, a Pharaoh arose who enslaved them and imposed heavy burdens upon them. As Joseph had prophesied, the Lord raised up Moses to deliver the children of Israel (2 Nephi 3:10)

In Exodus 1-2, the children of Israel multiplied and were put in bondage by the Egyptians (1:1-14). Pharaoh ordered that all sons born to the Israelites be destroyed (1:15-22). Moses was born to Levite parents; he was hidden, then found and raised by Pharaoh’s daughter (2:1-10). In defense of an Israelite, Moses killed an Egyptian and fled to Midian, where he married Zipporah (2:11-22). Israel cried out to the Lord.

Exodus 3:1-4 – Moses was called by the Lord from the burning bush.

Exodus 3:5-10 – Moses was informed that he was being sent to Pharaoh to liberate the Israelites. In calling Moses, we see that the Lord knows his people, is merciful to them, wants to bless them, and keeps his promises to them.

If you could imagine yourself as an Israelite slave, you would have been taught all your life that you were one of the covenant people and that the promises made to father Abraham would be fulfilled. Yet, you would live daily life in oppression. Today, we should remember that when we are in adverse circumstances, the Lord has not forgotten us, but he does not often deliver us from trials immediately. While enduring the trial in patience, we should pray with faith and maintain a strong testimony of his love and concern for us. Even while enduring, we may receive comfort and assistance.

Exodus 3:11; 4:1, 10 – Moses, in essence, said “Why me? I’m nobody and beside that, they won’t believe me...and I can’t even speak eloquently!”

Exodus 3:12; 4:11-12 – The Lord promised His support and presence and then reminded Moses that as the Creator, he could control Moses’ speech and teach him what to say. As we see from this, the Lord knows our inadequacies and needs, but he provides help, comfort, and inspiration so that if we are willing, we can overcome our inadequacies and develop the skills and abilities we need to fulfill any calling the Lord so chooses to give us.

Hebrews 11:24-26 tells us what Moses sacrificed to accept his calling—“*the pleasures of sin for a season*” and “*treasures in Egypt*”. We find that he accepted the call because he had faith. With faith, we can deny ourselves worldly rewards and accept the call to serve the Lord regardless of the sacrifices involved.

The Lord sent plagues upon Egypt (Exodus 5-6)

Exodus 5:1-9 – When told to let the people go, the Pharaoh denied any knowledge of the Lord—“Who is the Lord?”—and, rather than comply, decided to increase the difficulty of the slaves’ work.

Exodus 5:15-23 – The officers of the Israelites were critical of Moses and Aaron during this trial and Moses became critical of and questioned the Lord’s support. From this, we should understand the need for patience in our adversities. The Lord will fulfill his promises, but not necessarily on our schedule.

Exodus 6:4-8 repeats the Lord’s promises of keeping his covenant, redeeming his people and relieving them from bondage, and giving Israel a promised land—the land of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Exodus 6:9 – In spite of the Lord’s promises, the people hearkened not and were mired in depression. Hopefully, we have stronger testimonies and will not refuse to listen to the prophet when we suffer adversity. We can maintain faith in God while enduring by praying, studying and pondering the scriptures and the *Ensign*, giving service to others, remembering our covenants and the blessings associated with those covenants, serving in our calling(s), and reviewing our own and family journals for stories of strength.

Exodus 6:10-12 – Moses asks the Lord why Pharaoh would listen when his own people won’t. While we may sometimes be reluctant to obey the Lord because of our doubts and fears, the Lord will support us.

Summarizing Exodus 7-10, Moses was appointed to give the word of the Lord to Pharaoh. The Lord multiplied signs and wonders in Egypt and magicians imitated the miracles of Moses and Aaron. Plagues

sent by the Lord included frogs, lice, flies, destruction of the Egyptians' cattle, boils and blains, hail and fire, locusts, and three days of thick darkness, but Pharaoh only hardened his heart.

Satan counterfeits God's power

Exodus 7:8-12, 17-22 demonstrate that Satan could counterfeit God's power through Pharaoh's sorcerers as their rods became serpents; then they seemed to turn water to blood just as Aaron did. Today, Satan also attempts to counterfeit God's power and blessings to deceive mortals. However, we know that God has given us gifts so that we can discern between good and evil. We increase our discernment as we live righteous and faithful lives, so we can protect ourselves from being deceived if we remember our covenants and maintain the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

The Lord instructed Moses in the preparation of the Passover (Exodus 11-13)

Exodus 12:12-13, 22-27 teaches us the meaning of the first Passover and why the Lord instructed Israel to celebrate it "for ever" as an ordinance. In addition to reminding them of the Lord's protection, the Passover was also to symbolize God's future sacrifice of his Firstborn, which delivers us from sin and death.

Elder Howard W. Hunter taught that at the Passover meal that is now known as the Last Supper, *"the bread and wine, rather than animals and herbs, [became] emblems of the great Lamb's body and blood, emblems to be eaten and drunk reverently and in remembrance of him forever. In this simple but impressive manner the Savior instituted the ordinance now known as the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. With the suffering of Gethsemane, the sacrifice of Calvary, and the resurrection from a garden tomb, Jesus fulfilled the ancient law and ushered in a new dispensation based on a higher, holier understanding of the law of sacrifice. No more would men be required to offer the firstborn lamb from their flock, because the Firstborn of God had come to offer himself as an 'infinite and eternal sacrifice'"* (Ensign, May 1985, 19).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland asked: *"Do we see [the sacrament] as **our** Passover, remembrance of **our** safety and deliverance and redemption? With so very much at stake, this ordinance commemorating **our** escape from the angel of darkness should be taken more seriously than it sometimes is. It should be a powerful, reverent, reflective moment. It should encourage spiritual feelings and impressions"* (Ensign, Nov. 1995, 68).

Like the Lord commanded ancient Israel, we should teach our children the significance of the sacrament and other ordinances that remind us of the Lord's hand in delivering us from sin and death.

The children of Israel crossed the Red Sea (Exodus 14)

Exodus 14:5-9 – After releasing the children of Israel, Pharaoh turned against them and sent his army after them.

Exodus 14:10-12 records that the Israelites, seeing the pursuing army, lost their faith and lamented that it would have been better for them to remain as slaves in Egypt rather than die in the wilderness.

Exodus 14:13-14 – Moses tells the people not to fear and to watch the Lord fight for them. To demonstrate proper faith when we are filled with fear requires extensive prior spiritual preparation to develop an unshakable testimony that will sustain us in moments of tribulation.

Exodus 14:21-31 tells us that the Lord fulfilled his promise, sending a *"strong east wind all that night"* to make a dry way through the Red Sea for the Israelites, but causing the Egyptians' chariot wheels to come off and then closing the sea back in upon their chariots and horsemen. This miraculous intervention by the Lord should help us realize that there is no trial that the Lord cannot help us through if we are following his commandments and obeying his prophets.

"All were baptized...in the cloud and in the seas" (1 Corinthians 10:2)

1 Corinthians 10:1-4 contains Paul teachings that the children of Israel were baptized in the cloud and in the sea. Explaining the significance of this, Elder Bruce R. McConkie said, *"[Paul] is saying that even as Israel, when they passed through the Red Sea, fled from the worldliness of Egypt, so their Christian descendants, through baptism, are to forsake the lusts of the flesh and live godly lives"* (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 3 vols. [1966-73], 2:355).

Conclusion

Just as the Lord fulfilled his promise to deliver the Israelites from bondage, he will fulfill his promises to us. As we partake of the sacrament, we should think of and appreciate his sacrifice and keep the covenant to *"always remember him"*.

“Ye Shall Be a Peculiar Treasure unto Me”

Lesson 14 - Exodus 15-20; 32-34

Introduction

Imagine that you must journey into a wilderness where you have never been and that has not been mapped. What would your preparation include? One vital preparation would be to secure a guide to lead you. Think about the qualifications you'd want in such a guide. You'd want he/she to know the area well and be completely trustworthy. After fleeing Egypt, Moses and the children of Israel had the Lord as a guide. Today we will review some of their experiences while in the wilderness to see what we can learn about *our* journey through mortality. The first lesson we should learn is to choose God as our guide through “*the mists of darkness*” in this celestial wilderness.

The Lord provided water, manna, and quail for the children of Israel

After passing through the Red Sea to safety, Moses was to lead them to the Promised Land. The Lord, however, wanted to test their faithfulness before giving them an inheritance. Unfortunately, many of them lacked faith and chose to complain to the Lord rather than seeking his counsel. In spite of their faithlessness, the Lord provided water for their thirst and manna and quail for food.

- **Exodus 15:22-24; 17:1-7** records the first challenge—lack of water. In response, the people blamed Moses and he feared they would stone him. He turned to the Lord and received help.
- **1 Corinthians 10:4** - The Lord provided physical and spiritual water for the children of Israel—physical water from a rock Moses smote and “*spiritual water*” from the “*spiritual Rock*”, which is Christ.
- **1 Nephi 11:25** teaches that the water represents the love of God.
- **John 4:14** teaches that we will never thirst if we drink of that water.
- **Exodus 16:2-4, 11-15** shows the second problem and its divine solution. In addition to satisfying their hunger, other purposes of the manna included **a)** Giving the Lord an opportunity to see if his people would obey him (Exodus 16:4, 16-31), **b)** The people would have a daily reminder of the Lord's power and love (Exodus 16:12), **c)** The people would be taught that they do not live “by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord” (Deuteronomy 8:3), **d)** The people would be humbled and be helped to receive salvation (Deuteronomy 8:16).
- **John 6:35, 48-51** - the manna is a representation of Christ, the “*bread of life*”. But if we make Christ a part of us, we will never hunger and will have everlasting life.
- Just as the Israelites needed to gather manna daily for physical strength, we cannot expect to have the necessary spiritual strength unless we pray sincerely daily, not just occasionally or in an hour of tribulation.
- **Exodus 16:19-20, 22-25** shows that stored manna became wormy, but when it was saved for the Sabbath, as the Lord directed, it was wholesome and pure. We too should prepare for the Sabbath such that the homemaker is not required to spend the day in the kitchen preparing large, elaborate meals.
- The Israelites would have been completely lost in the wilderness without their guide, the Lord. There are obvious parallels in our journey through mortality—we will be lost without the Lord.

Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hands so Israel could prevail in the battle against Amalek.

The Amalekites warred against the Israelites for many years. In Exodus 17:8-13, the Israelites were victorious as Aaron and Hur sustained Moses by supporting his arms. In our battles against sin, we too need the support of the prophet to prevail. **President Ezra Taft Benson** said: “*I am reminded how Moses up on the hill raised his arms for the victory of the armies of Israel. As long as his arms were raised, Israel prevailed, but when they dropped from weariness, then the enemy prevailed. And so Aaron and Hur ‘stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side,’ and Israel was victorious (Exodus 17:12). So will we be victorious as we hold up the arms of the Lord’s anointed servants*” (*Ensign*, May 1986, 77).

We can hold up the hands of our prophet and ease the burdens of the general authorities and local leaders by speaking well of them, serving diligently in our callings, and being committed home and visiting teachers.

Moses followed Jethro's counsel to appoint judges and delegate authority to them

Exodus 18:13-23 tells us of Jethro's concerns as he saw the people seek out Moses daily. His counsel helped Moses deal with the daily responsibility for the people.

Exodus 18:16-20 mentions some responsibilities of a prophet: - Be a judge for the people (16), Represent the people before God (19), “Teach them ordinances and laws” (20), “[Show] them the way wherein they must walk” (20), and “[Show] them...the work that they must do” (20)

The Lord met with Moses on Mount Sinai and Moses received the Ten Commandments

Within the first 90 days of Israel’s freedom, the Lord wanted to establish a covenant with them. The Ten Commandments were revealed as part of this covenant.

Exodus 19:3-6 – While they were encamped at Mount Sinai, the Lord promised that if the Israelites were obedient, he would make them “*a peculiar treasure, ...a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.*” These promises mean that Israel would become the Lord’s covenant people being favored above all others, chosen to bear the priesthood, and chosen to spread the gospel to all the world. In this context, the word “*peculiar*” means *special or treasured* rather than “*odd*”.

Exodus 19:9, 11, 16-17; D&C 84:23 records that the Lord wanted to meet with and speak to his people, so he instructed Moses to sanctify them so that they would be ready for this opportunity. Just as Mount Sinai was a holy place at that time, we have holy places wherein we seek to communicate with the Lord and have spiritual experiences including feeling the presence of the Lord. Our temples give us this opportunity if we prepare ourselves for it.

Exodus 20:3-11 – The first four commandments teach the proper relationship between us and our God. The commandment to worship God and have no other gods before him is still relevant today since some people choose to set up false gods that they worship (see **D&C 1:15-16**). President Spencer W. Kimball said: “*Idolatry is among the most serious of sins...Modern idols or false gods can take such forms as clothes, homes, businesses, machines, automobiles, pleasure boats, and numerous other material deflectors from the path to godhood...Intangibles things make just as ready gods. Degrees and letters and titles can become idols... Many people build and furnish a home and buy the automobile first—and then they ‘cannot afford’ to pay tithing. Whom do they worship? Certainly not the Lord of heaven and earth... Many worship the hunt, the fishing trip, the vacation, the weekend picnics and outings. Others have as their idols the games of sport, baseball, football, the bullfight, or golf... Still another image men worship is that of power and prestige...These gods of power, wealth, and influence are most demanding and are quite as real as the golden calves of the children of Israel in the wilderness*” (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [1969], 40-42).

The Golden Calf (Exodus 32)

Numerous principles can be drawn from the story of the building and worshipping of the golden calf. Two principles are: 1. Old habits and patterns of belief are very hard to break. While no longer resident in Israel, they were far from spiritually free from Egyptian influences and behavior. After hearing the voice of God proclaim the Ten Commandments from Sinai, they proceeded to immediately break the first two commandments. 2. It is important to resist and overcome peer pressure. Aaron gave in to the unrighteous desires of the newly-freed Israelites. As a leader, he should have said “no”, even though he might have offended those under his stewardship.

The Mosaic Law was introduced to the children of Israel (*Exodus 32-34*)

D&C 84:19-23 – On Mount Sinai, the Lord revealed a law including the ordinances of the Melchizedek priesthood. However, the Israelites’ idolatrous behavior showed that they were not ready to live that law and the fullness of the gospel, so he withdrew the Melchizedek priesthood and gave the Mosaic law.

The Law of Moses did not replace the commandments or covenants of the gospel, but it did provide a law of performances and of ordinances. It taught people to confess their sins and make amends, follow strict rules of animal sacrifices, keep their bodies healthy, support the Lord’s work, give thanks, and be reconciled to God.

Elder M. Russell Ballard taught: “*Although the Law of Moses was fulfilled, the principles of the law of sacrifice continue to be a part of the doctrine of the Church. ... While the primary purpose of the law of sacrifice continued to be that of testing and assisting us to come unto Christ, two adjustments were made after Christ’s ultimate sacrifice. First, the ordinance of the sacrament replaced the ordinance of [animal] sacrifice; and second, this change moved the focus of the sacrifice from a person’s animal to the person himself. In a sense, the sacrifice changed from the offering to the offerer...After his mortal ministry, Christ elevated the law of sacrifice to a new level...Instead of the Lord requiring a person’s animal or grain, now the Lord wants us to give up all that is ungodly. This is a higher practice of the law of sacrifice; it reaches into the inner soul of a person*” (*The Law of Sacrifice* {address at CES Symposium, 13 Aug. 1996], 5).

“Look to God and Live” **Lesson 15 - Numbers 11:4; 21:1-9**

Introduction

Despite the blessings the Israelites received from the Lord, their fear and lack of faith often caused them to wish they had not left Egypt. Their yearning for Egypt delayed and complicated their journey to the promised land.

The Lord sent the Israelites quail and smote them with a plague (Numbers 11)

Numbers 11:4-6 – Even though manna was a great blessing from the Lord, the Israelites began to think about the meat and other foods they had enjoyed while in Egypt, so they began to complain about the manna. Wanting more than we already have can be dangerous to our temporal and spiritual welfare. In their whining over the lack of meat and what they missed about Egypt, they lost sight of their goal to obtain the promised land and they began to regret leaving Egypt. In our times, we can observe people giving up great blessings and opportunities in order to satisfy their immediate lusts and desires. While this may be expected among some, we need to think seriously sometimes about how we can avoid such mistakes and misguided priorities. Studying the scriptures and understanding the lessons taught therein, we should focus ourselves on the plan of salvation and eternal goals that are worthy of our attention.

Numbers 11:18-20; 31-33 details how the Lord answered their desire for meat and the consequences that accompanied their lustful consumption of the quail.

Numbers 11:14-17 shows that Moses became so burdened by the sins of his people, he asked the Lord to take his life. The Lord gave him some relief as seventy men were called to assist Moses.

Numbers 11:24-29. The seventy elders of Israel were given the spirit of the Lord and the gift of prophecy.

Miriam and Aaron were chastened for speaking against Moses (Numbers 12)

Numbers 12:2 - Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses, their presiding authority, for taking an Ethiopian woman as a wife. They pointed out that they too had received revelation.

Numbers 12:5-10 contains the Lord’s reply to Aaron and Miriam’s complaints. His anger was kindled against them as is shown by Miriam’s immediate punishment of leprosy.

Speaking about the limits of our rights to receive revelation, Elder James E. Faust said: *“The prophets, seers, and revelators have had and still have the responsibility and privilege of receiving and declaring the word of God for the world. Individual members, parents, and leaders have the right to receive revelation for their own responsibility but have no duty nor right to declare the word of God beyond the limits of their own responsibility”* (Ensign, Nov. 1989, 8).

Numbers 12:3 says that *“Moses was very meek”*. President Gordon B. Hinckley said: *“Meekness implies a spirit of gratitude as opposed to an attitude of self-sufficiency, an acknowledgement of a greater power beyond oneself, a recognition of God, and an acceptance of his commandments”* (Ensign, Aug. 1988, 3-4).

Numbers 12:13-15 shows Moses’ meekness when he saw Miriam’s punishment for rebelling against him. Rather than being pleased with his authority to preside over his sister, he pleaded with the Lord to heal her. He even had their journey halted until she was healed. As we consider his example, we should cultivate the attribute of meekness so that we may demonstrate it when others criticize or turn against us. Responding in meekness is consistent with the later teachings of Jesus to turn the other cheek.

A dozen men were sent to search the land of Canaan (Numbers 13-14)

Numbers 13:17-20 records Moses’ actions when they reached the border of Canaan.

Numbers 13:23-27 tells us that the spies reported the land was flowing with milk and honey!

Numbers 13:28-33 - ten of the men had returned in fear and caused the people to murmur against Moses. As President Gordon B. Hinckley said: *“Ten of the spies were victims of their own doubts and fears. They gave a negative report of the numbers and stature of the Canaanites...They compared themselves as grasshoppers to the giants they had seen in the land...We see some around us who are indifferent concerning the future of this work, who are apathetic, who speak of limitations, who express fears, who spend their time digging out and writing about what they regard to be weaknesses which really are of no consequence. With doubt concerning its past, they have no vision concerning its future”* (Ensign, Nov. 1995, 71).

Obviously, we need to be extremely careful that we do not fall into such a faithless pattern of behavior.

Numbers 13:30; 14:6-9 – The report from Caleb and Joshua differed from their 10 companions. They were unafraid because they knew the Lord was with Israel.

Referring to such situations as this where faith needs to overcome any doubts, President Gordon B. Hinckley said: *“There is no place in this work for those who believe only in the gospel of doom and gloom. The gospel is good news. It is a message of triumph. It is a cause to be embraced with enthusiasm. The Lord never said that there would not be troubles. Our people have known afflictions of every sort as those who have opposed this work have come upon them. But faith has shown through all their sorrows. This work has consistently moved forward and has never taken a backward step since its inception... This is an age of pessimism. Ours is a mission of faith. To my brothers and sisters everywhere, I call upon you to reaffirm your faith, to move this work forward across the world. You can make it stronger by the manner in which you live”* (Ensign, Nov. 1995, 71-72).

Numbers 14:10 demonstrates just how faithless the people were as they desired to stone Caleb and Joshua after those brethren testified to them and tried to motivate and encourage them.

***Numbers 14:22-23, 26-37** (portions cited above) says the Lord banished the unbelieving men from the promised land because they provoked him repeatedly. The “*evil congregation*” was to die in the wilderness. The other ten spies died “*by the plague*”, yet Caleb and Joshua lived on in faithfulness.

Moses made a serpent of brass and told the people to look at it to be healed (Num. 21:1-9)

Numbers 21:6-7 records that the Lord sent fiery serpents among them when the Israelites continued to murmur even after the Canaanites had been defeated because of the protection of the Lord. To their credit, the murmuring people got the message and responded with repentance.

Numbers 21:8-9 – To overcome the danger of the serpents, Moses was instructed to mount a brass serpent on a pole and inform the people to look to it when they were bitten and they would be healed.

In the Book of Mormon, Nephi and Alma taught that many Israelites died rather than look upon the brass serpent. **1 Nephi 17:41** and **Alma 33:18-20** tell us why they refused to look—because they had hardened their hearts and besides that, looking at a brass serpent was just too simple and easy.

John 3:14-16, Helaman 8:13-14 tells us that the raised serpent was a type of Christ being raised up on the cross. Just as the children of Israel needed to look to the brass serpent to live, we need to look to the Savior to receive eternal life. Looking to Christ means that we must look to him for guidance, for his example, his teachings and commandments, and his counsel through his prophets on how we are to live righteously. Speaking of our need to look to Christ, Elder Carlos E. Asay said: *“We, like Israel of old, must rivet our eyes and minds upon...Christ if we hope to gain eternal life...Our looks must not be allowed to wander across the way or to become fixed upon the perishable things of the world. The eye...must be trained to look upward. We must look to God and live!”* (Ensign, Nov. 1978, 54).

Alma taught that just as the way to be healed from the fiery serpents was easy, the way to eternal life is easy (**Alma 37:46**). In the sense that the saving principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ are simple, clear, and can be followed by all, the way is easy. The complications usually attributed to trying to live the gospel are frequently the result of people trying to live only parts of the gospel while still retaining some worldly ways and unholy attitudes. The gospel way is truly easy if we have faith in Christ, repent and chose righteousness, accept baptism of water and of the spirit, pray for guidance and strength daily, and obey the commandments faithfully. The key is to focus our lives on the Savior.

Conclusion

Look past the things of the world and be unafraid of the “*giants*” that distract us from the things that are most important. If we will “*look upon the Son of God with faith*” (Helaman 8:15) and follow his prophets, we will be blessed in this life and in the life to come.

“I Cannot Go Beyond the Word of the Lord”

Lesson 16 - Numbers 22-24; 31:1-16

Introduction

Today we will study the story of Balaam, who professed strict obedience but in his heart desired worldly rewards and honors of men. This lesson is designed to show the consequences of stubbornly insisting on our own will to fulfill such desires.

Balaam refused Balak’s offer of rewards in exchange for cursing Israel (Numbers 22:1-21)

Numbers 22:5-7 – Because he was terrified by the approach of the Israelites, Balak, king of Moab, dispatched messengers to offer Balaam rewards if he would journey to Moab and curse Israel so that Balak could drive them out of the land.

Numbers 22:8-14 tells us that Balaam responded by refusing to go curse the Israelites because the Lord would not allow him to do so.

Application: We are sometimes offered “rewards” to disobey God. Balaam was tempted by the promised rewards, but we should resolve that riches and the honors of men will not tempt us.

After Balaam refused to come to Moab, Balak sent a second group of men, more impressive than the first, to try to persuade him.

Numbers 22:15-19 – Obviously, Balaam was tempted by this second offer. Balak offered “very great honor”. Being tempted, Balaam wanted to petition the Lord again. Perhaps he was hoping that the Lord would change his mind and allow him to accept the rewards offered by Balak, but at this point, he said, “...*I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God...*” (22:18).

Application: As Joseph Smith found out centuries later when he asked the Lord about the 116 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript, there are dangers in persistently seeking an exception to God’s directions. As we examine the things we petition the Lord to allow us to do, are we sometimes persistent in an unworthy cause?

Numbers 22:20-22 - The Lord gave permission for Balaam to go with Balak’s messengers if he so desired, but the Lord was angry with Balaam for going because he knew what was in Balaam’s heart.

2 Peter 2:15; Isaiah 29:13 – Here, we are told that Balaam “*loved the wages of unrighteousness*” and Isaiah reminds us that some, like Balaam, will draw near with their lips while their hearts are far away.

The Lord showed the danger of Balaam’s stubborn insistence on his own will (Numbers 22:22-35)

Numbers 22:22-30 – On his way to Moab, Balaam tried three times to force his donkey forward while the donkey balked because of the angel who blocked the way. Demonstrating his stubbornness, Balaam wanted to force his own will on the donkey and the Lord. Just as the donkey saw the angel and Balaam did not, the Lord saw many things that Balaam refused to see.

Application: If we examine some common situations in our day, we see modern parallels of both individuals and groups stubbornly trying to do what they want to do rather than submitting to God’s will or the righteous counsel of parents or leaders. As examples: 1. A child, unhappy with the answer from Mom goes to Dad seeking a different answer, 2. A member of the Church, unsatisfied with the counsel of a priesthood leader, seeks out another priesthood leader, 3. A member of the Church rationalizes that a commandment doesn’t apply to him or her as it does to other members.

Numbers 22:31-35 -The Lord chastened Balaam through the mouth of the ass and the angel. Balaam decided to return home, but the angel told him to continue, but to remember that he should only do as commanded by the Lord.

D&C 95:1 explains why God chastens his children—because he loves them, will forgive them with chastening, and will prepare a way out of the temptations.

Application: God’s chastening can be a blessing to us—if we accept it humbly, seeking forgiveness and direction on how to turn our lives around and become exacting in our obedience.

Balaam refused to curse Israel (Numbers 22:36-24:25)

After Balaam arrived in Moab, Balak asked him three times to curse Israel. Each time the Lord told Balaam to bless Israel, and Balaam obeyed.

Numbers 22:38; 23:8, 19-20; 24:1, 12-13 – Balaam continues to tell Balak that he must say what God commands and he will not go beyond that.

Numbers 22:41; 23:1-3, 13-15, 27-30 - Even though he had refused to curse Israel as Balak requested, weakness was still evident in Balaam as he followed Balak from place to place and listened to his requests even though he knew that they were wrong.

Application: If we place ourselves in temptation's path, we will be confronted with unrighteous suggestions from friends, acquaintances, or the media. Eventually, our resistance can be worn down and we can succumb to temptations that we otherwise would not have considered.

The Israelites destroyed the Midianites and slew Balaam (Numbers 31:1-16)

Numbers 31:1-3 – Moses sent forth warriors to destroy the Midianites because the Lord was angry with them for enticing the children of Israel to sin as recorded in Numbers 25:1-3. It was Balaam who had counseled the Midianites to tempt the children of Israel to participate in idol worship and sexual immorality.

Numbers 31:16 – Balaam's counsel had caused the children of Israel to trespass against the Lord. Although Balaam obeyed the Lord to bless rather than curse Israel, in his heart he wanted earthly honors and tangible rewards. To receive his desired rewards, Balaam suggested tempting Israel to sin, causing them to lose the Lord's protection.

Numbers 31:8 – During the battle, Balaam was slain by the warriors of Israel along with the kings of the Midianites. As Balaam had conspired to bring death upon the Israelites, he ultimately reaped what he sowed.

2 Peter 2:15-16; Jude 1:11; Revelation 2:14 – New Testament writers gave their impressions of Balaam as one who loved unrighteousness and was rebuked for his iniquity; a greedy seeker of reward; and one who cast a stumbling block before Israel, enticing them to commit sin.

Application: Lessons we can learn from this story include: Members of the Church who seek earthly rewards and honors, who seek exceptions to God's counsel and commandments, or who try to introduce worldly ideas, practices, or standards into the Church are following Balaam's unrighteous example. This is called the "*doctrine of Balaam*" in Revelation 2:14.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: "*What a story this is! Here is a prophet of God who is firmly committed to declare only what the Lord of heaven directs. There does not seem to be the slightest doubt in his mind about the course he should pursue. He represents the Lord, and neither a house full of gold and silver nor the high honors offered by the king can sway him from his determined course...*

"But greed for wealth and lust for honor beckon him. How marvelous it would be [for him] to be rich and powerful... Perhaps the Lord would let him compromise his standards and have some worldly prosperity and power. ...I wonder how often some of us get our direction from the Church and then, Balaam-like, plead for some worldly rewards..."

"Balaam...inspired and mighty as he once was, lost his soul in the end because he set his heart on the things of this world rather than the riches of eternity" (New Era, Apr. 1972, 7).

Although Balaam pretended to be strictly obedient, the desires of his heart were to receive earthly rewards and honors. As we consider his example, we need to keep the desires of our heart pure so that we do not make Balaam's mistakes.

Conclusion

If Balaam had humbly submitted to God's will, much sin and suffering would have been avoided for himself and for Israel. We should be steadfast rather than stubborn—seeking to follow the Lord's will without trying to get around it or change it.

“Beware Lest Thou Forget”

Lesson 17 - Deuteronomy 6, 8, 11, 32

Introduction

Think about objects scattered around your home. There should be some common objects (scriptures, pictures, books, and musical recordings) that remind you of the Lord and the covenants you have made with him. Today, we'll talk about some physical objects that the ancient Israelites used to remind themselves of the Lord and their covenants with him. In Deuteronomy, Moses taught the children of Israel to fashion an environment that would help them to resist Satan's temptations. This lesson reviews his counsel. Today's lesson will help us remember the Lord, our sacred covenants, and encourage us to create an environment, including physical objects, that will assist us in honoring our covenants.

Background: After trying, chastening, and instructing the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness for some four decades, the Lord announced that they were finally approved to enter the land of their inheritance. But first, Moses had to deliver some important instructions from the Lord in three sermons that are recorded in Deuteronomy. In these sermons Moses reviewed Israel's 40-year sojourn in the wilderness, recognizing God's hand in their deliverance. Moses also discussed Israel's responsibilities as God's chosen people. He emphasized that they must obey God's commandments, particularly the commands to remember Him and refrain from idol worship. Moses warned that although the children of Israel were ready to enter the promised land, if they returned to wickedness they would lose their inheritance and be scattered. Remember that Deuteronomy contains Moses' last words to the Israelites.

“He will not forsake thee” (Deuteronomy 4:31)

After prophesying that the Israelites would turn to the worship of other gods and be scattered (Deuteronomy 4:25-28), Moses offered words of hope...

Deuteronomy 4:29-31 – Moses promised those who seek the Lord with all their hearts that *“thou shalt find him”*, and further, that they would not be forsaken, destroyed, or forgotten. (Also see Isaiah 49:14-16.)

Moses gave instructions to the Israelites to help them remember their covenants.

Deuteronomy 6:5-9; 11:18-20 - The Lord commanded the Israelites to put the words of the scriptures into their hearts. Moses counseled the Israelites to wear frontlets—strips of parchment on which were written four passages of scripture. Those scriptures *“were rolled up and attached to bands of leather worn ... around the forehead or around the arm”* [Bible Dictionary, “Frontlets,” 676].

Moses told the people to place passages of scripture between their eyes, on their hands, on the posts of their houses, and on their gates. He understood the importance of such constant physical reminders.

Application: Parents must effectively teach the gospel to their children and help them learn to love the scriptures. In our homes, the pictures on our walls, the books we buy and read, and the movies and television shows we watch can remind us of the Lord, his words, and our covenants with him, or they can reflect worldly concerns.

“Write them upon the posts of thy house” (Deuteronomy 6:9)

If you listed the paintings, posters, musical and/or video recordings, and other objects (magazines, books, collectibles) in your home and labeled each item with either a “+” (indicating that the object is likely to lead you to remember the Lord) or a “-” (indicating that it is more likely to lead your heart away from the Lord), how would your home score? You may want to do this with your family during a family home evening.

President Ezra Taft Benson said that people who are *“captained by Christ will be consumed in Christ. ... Enter their homes, and the pictures on their walls, the books on their shelves, the music in the air, their words and acts reveal them as Christians”* (Ensign, Nov. 1985, 6-7).

Moses counseled the Israelites to obey God's commandments and remember Him.

Deuteronomy 6:10-12; 8:1-20 - Moses' wanted to be sure they remembered the Lord, obeyed the commandments, remembered the blessings from the Lord, and worshipped him rather than idols.

Deuteronomy 8:11 - We “forget” the Lord when we do not obey his commandments.

Deuteronomy 8:19 - Moses spelled out the consequences of forgetting God – they would perish!

Application: How can we be sure that we do not forget God?

***Deuteronomy 6:10-12; 8:10-20** (Cited above) – Moses warned that success, prosperity, pride, and subsequent disobedience might cause people to forget God.

Deuteronomy 8:17 – Moses specifically warned against pride and conceit that comes with riches. President Brigham Young said: *“The worst fear that I have about [members of this Church] is that they will get rich in this country, forget God and his people, wax fat, and kick themselves out of the Church and go to hell. This people will stand mobbing, robbing, poverty, and all manner of persecution, and be true. But my greater fear for them is that they cannot stand wealth; and yet they have to be tried with riches, for they will become the richest people on this earth”* (Brigham Young: *The Man and His Work* [1936], 128).

Deuteronomy 8:18 – The people were reminded that the Lord is the source of any prosperity.

Deuteronomy 8:18; Jacob 2:18-19 – The people’s blessings came as a fulfillment of the Lord’s covenant with their fathers. Those riches were intended to be used in the Lord’s work.

Withstanding the negative influences of others

Deuteronomy 13:6-8 – One major danger Moses warn against was being drawn into worshipping idols.

Application: We need to carefully evaluate influences from others who might try to pull us away from the Lord. If someone tries to tempt us, we should be prepared to counteract that influence immediately.

“They shall not appear before the Lord empty”

Deuteronomy 16:2,11,16 - The place mentioned is the tabernacle, which was the portable temple for the Israelites. In preparation for a feast at the tabernacle, Moses instructed the people not to *“appear before the Lord empty”* (Deuteronomy 16:16).

Application: Today, this counsel might apply to our temple attendance. With proper preparation for temple attendance, we can assure that we do not enter the temple “empty”. Our preparation should help us to *“rejoice before the Lord”* in the temple (Deuteronomy 16:11).

President Howard W. Hunter counseled: *“Let us be a temple-attending people. Attend the temple as frequently as personal circumstances allow. Keep a picture of a temple in your home that your children may see it”* (Ensign, Nov. 1994, 8). It is important for us to go to the temple as frequently as possible to remember our covenants and cultivate a proper spirit within us. To remind us of this responsibility and privilege, it is important to keep a picture of a temple in our homes as a constant reminder.

Moses counseled the Israelites to be mindful of Christ - the “Rock” of their salvation

Deuteronomy 32:3-4, 15, 18, 30-31 - The Rock spoken of is the Lord

Helaman 5:12 - The rock symbolizes the solid foundation provided by Jesus Christ.

Deuteronomy 32:31 - Moses declared that *“their rock”* (the false gods of the wicked) *“is not as our Rock”*

Deuteronomy 32:37-40 – *“Their rock”* is different from *“our Rock”* (Christ) because their rock is not God and cannot provide the blessings of the true god.

Deuteronomy 18:18-19 - This scripture, in prophesying of the coming of Christ, tells of the need to hearken to his words.

Conclusion

The things we place around us—such as pictures, books, and music—can be powerful reminders of the Lord and the covenants we have made with him. Our purpose in surrounding ourselves with these things is the same as the ancient Israelites’ purpose in wearing frontlets: to help us build upon *“the Rock”*—to help us remember and follow the Lord.

“No man knoweth of his sepulchre” (Deuteronomy 34:6)

The writer who finished the book of Deuteronomy knew only that Moses was gone and so assumed that he had died, that the Lord had buried him, and that no one knew where his grave was. However, we know that Moses was translated. (For an explanation of the state of translated beings, see 3 Nephi 28:7-9, 37-40.) The Bible Dictionary gives the following explanation of Moses’ translation: *“As was the case with many of the ancient prophets, Moses’ ministry extended beyond the limits of his own mortal lifetime. In company with Elijah, he came to the Mount of Transfiguration and bestowed keys of the priesthood upon Peter, James, and John* (Matthew 17:3-4; Mark 9:4-9; Luke 9:30; D&C 63:21; History of the Church, 3:387). *From this event, which occurred before the resurrection of Jesus, we understand that Moses was a translated being and had not died as reported in Deuteronomy 34* (Alma 45:19). *It was necessary that he be translated, in order to have a body of flesh and bones at the time of the transfiguration, since the resurrection had not yet taken place. Had he been a spirit only, he could not have performed the work on the mount of giving the keys to the mortal Peter, James, and John* (cf. D&C 129)” (Bible Dictionary, “Moses,” 735).

“Be Strong and of a Good Courage”

Lesson 18 - Joshua 1-6; 23-24

Introduction

This lesson is about Joshua, the prophet who led the children of Israel in their conquest of the promised land. When calling Joshua to be a prophet and succeed Moses, the Lord counseled him to “*be strong and of a good courage*” (Joshua 1:6) and commanded him to study the scriptures and keep the commandments. Joshua became strong as he allowed God to shape his character. Similarly, as we allow God to shape our character, we can become strong in living the gospel of Jesus Christ and accomplish the things the Lord wants us to do.

Background: During the Israelites’ 40-year sojourn in the wilderness, Moses had given them God’s law, acted as God’s spokesman, and served as their guide. He was the only leader an entire generation of Israelites had known. But the Lord took him at the end of their sojourn—just when they faced a great test. Remembering his promises to Israel, the Lord raised up a new leader, Joshua, who ably directed the conquest and settlement of the promised land.

The Lord called Joshua (Joshua 1)

Joshua faced many challenges when the Lord called him to succeed Moses in leading the Israelites. He had to lead Israel in the conquest and settlement of Canaan, which was a mighty undertaking. He was also taking the place of a great leader.

Joshua 1:5 - The Lord gave Joshua assurances as Joshua prepared to enter the promised land.

Application: The Lord’s assurance, often given in priesthood blessings as a person is set apart for a new calling, helps us in a new callings or one which presents particular challenges for us.

Joshua 1:6-9 - The Lord’s command to be strong and of a good courage was repeated three times.

Joshua 1:7 - The Lord said Joshua would need courage and strength to ‘do according to all the law’. Although Joshua would need courage to fight many military battles, he would also need moral courage—the courage to do what is right to observe all the law.

Application: We also face challenges today that require strength and moral courage, so we need to learn from Joshua’s example.

Joshua 1:8 - The Lord told Joshua to meditate on the “*book of the law*”(scriptures) to “*have good success*”.

Discussion - If scripture study was important for Joshua to succeed in his calling, how does regular scripture study help us meet our challenges?

The Israelites crossed the Jordan on dry ground; through their faith, Jericho was destroyed.

Joshua 3:7-8, 14-17; 4:14 - When the Israelites needed to cross the Jordan River, its banks were overflowing. The Lord showed the children of Israel that he was with Joshua just as he had been with Moses by allowing them to cross over on dry ground. (The Ark of the Covenant was a portable altar that contained sacred writings, including Moses’ writings and the tablets containing the Ten Commandments.)

Discussion: Just as he demonstrated for Israel that Joshua was his authorized servant and prophet, the Lord shows us that he directs and inspires the living prophet just as he did past prophets.

Joshua 3:13-17 (14-17 cited above) - The priests who carried the ark had to step into the water before the waters of the Jordan River were stopped.

Discussion: The Lord sometimes asks similar things of us. He often requires a demonstration of faith and then blesses us for our faith in him and his word only after we take those first steps of obedience. This principle is the subject of this story from Elder Boyd K. Packer: “*Shortly after I was called as a General Authority, I went to Elder Harold B. Lee for counsel. He listened very carefully to my problem and suggested that I see President David O. McKay. President McKay counseled me as to the direction I should go. I was very willing to be obedient but saw no way possible for me to do as he counseled me to do. I returned to Elder Lee and told him that I saw no way to move in the direction I was counseled to go. He said, ‘The trouble with you is you want to see the end from the beginning.’ I replied that I would like to see at least a step or two ahead. Then came the lesson of a lifetime: ‘You must learn to walk to the edge of the light, and then a few steps into the darkness; then the light will appear and show the way before you’ ” (BYU Today, Mar. 1991, 22-23).*

Joshua 4:1-9 – The Israelites were told to set up a memorial of 12 stones after crossing the Jordan River. It was to be a testimony of the Lord’s power to future generations, reminding them that the Lord would bless them just as he had their fathers.

Discussion: What personal memorials remind you of God’s power in your life? What about the sacrament; pictures of Christ, temples, and prophets; the scriptures, and spiritual experiences recorded in journals?

Joshua 4:21-24 - These memorials bless the lives of others as they learn to appreciate the Lord's power. *Discussion:* The Lord answers prayers, gives blessings, gives revelation, and performs wonderful works for each new generation; so many such memorials have been established.

Joshua 6 describes the fall of Jericho.

Hebrews 11:30 - The walls of Jericho fell because of faith. The Israelites' behavior was an act of faith because they had no reason to know that their marching and trumpeting would bring down the walls, so they acted on faith that the Lord would fulfill his promise.

Joshua 6:17, 22-25; 2:1-15 - The only inhabitants of Jericho who were saved were Rahab and her family because she hid the messengers who had been sent as spies.

Caleb received the land of Hebron

Joshua 14 recounts how Caleb received the land of Hebron from Joshua because he had "wholly followed the Lord".

President Spencer W. Kimball stated his admiration for Caleb and suggested some lessons we can learn from him: *"From Caleb's example we learn very important lessons. Just as Caleb had to struggle and remain true and faithful to gain his inheritance, so we must remember that, while the Lord has promised us a place in his kingdom, we must ever strive constantly and faithfully so as to be worthy to receive the reward... "Caleb concluded his moving declaration with a request and a challenge with which my heart finds full sympathy. The Anakims, the giants, were still inhabiting the promised land, and they had to be overcome. Said Caleb, now at 85 years, 'Give me this mountain' (Joshua 14:12). "This is my feeling for the work at this moment. There are great challenges ahead of us, giant opportunities to be met. I welcome that exciting prospect and feel to say to the Lord, humbly, 'Give me this mountain,' give me these challenges" (Ensign, Nov. 1979, 79).*

Joshua and his people covenanted to serve the Lord.

Toward the end of his life, Joshua reminded the Israelites what God had done for them. Joshua also counseled them about avoiding traps and snares.

Application: There are simple things we can do to avoid being caught in a trap—first, recognize that it is a trap and then, stay away from it!

Joshua 23:8; 23:12 - In his final counsel, Joshua exhorted Israel to *"cleave unto the Lord"* rather than *"cleave unto the remnant of [the Canaanite] nations"*. Note that in this instance, the word *cleave* means to glue or join together.

Discussion: Each day we choose—consciously or unconsciously—to either "cleave unto the Lord" or to cleave unto the world. Cleaving to the Canaanite nations would be a snare and a trap to the Israelites, but in class we will discuss some of the snares and traps of the world that we face today.

Joshua 24:14-15 – Joshua's important counsel on choice was given near the end of his life.

Joshua 24:15-18, 21-25, 31 - Joshua and Israel covenanted to serve God.

The following counsel from a latter-day apostle reminds us that a person cannot serve the true God and worldly gods at the same time; that it is important to choose *today* to serve the Lord...

Elder Marvin J. Ashton said: *"Joshua reminds us of the importance of making decisions promptly: 'Choose you this day whom ye will serve; ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord' (Joshua 24:15) Not tomorrow, not when we get ready, not when it is convenient—but 'this day,' straightway, choose whom you will serve. He who invites us to follow will always be out in front of us with His Spirit and influence setting the pace. He has charted and marked the course, opened the gates, and shown the way. He has invited us to come unto Him, and the best time to enjoy His companionship is straightway. We can best get on the course and stay on the course by doing as Jesus did—make a total commitment to do the will of His Father"* (Ensign, May 1983, 30-31).

Conclusion

Joshua's final counsel to the Israelites included the same charge that the Lord had given when calling him to be a prophet—to be strong and to have courage (Joshua 23:1-6) The charge applies as much today as it did then because we are all engaged in the important spiritual battle between good and evil.

Elder Ezra Taft Benson said that two principles are essential for security and peace: *"First, trust in God; and second, a determination to keep the commandments, to serve the Lord, to do that which is right. ... The Lord has made it very clear in the revelations that even though times become perilous, even though we be surrounded by temptation and sin, even though there be a feeling of insecurity, even though men's hearts may fail them and anxiety fill their souls, if we only trust in God and keep his commandments we need have no fear"* (Conference Report, Oct. 1950, 146).

“The Reign of the Judges”

Lesson 19 – Judges 2, 4, 6-7, 13-16

Introduction

President Gordon B. Hinckley told of a time when he planted a young tree in his yard but neglected to use supporting stakes to help it grow straight. In time, the wind caused the tree to lean badly to one side. President Hinckley realized that if he had tied the tree to stakes, it would have been supported until it was strong enough to resist the wind on its own. (*Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 59.) We may sometimes be like that young tree, unable to withstand the wind (the temptations of Satan) on our own. In the book of Judges we learn about some of the “stakes” that can support us—righteous parents, faith in God, righteous friends, and covenants.

Background: Led by Joshua, the Israelites conquered much of the promised land. After Joshua died, Israel was not united under a single leader until the days of the prophet Samuel and King Saul. During this interval, 12 judges served as Israel’s rulers and military leaders. Most of their reign was tragic as Israel went through the cycle of apostasy, bondage, repentance, and delivery many times. Offsetting this tragic history are stories of people who remained true, setting powerful examples of how to exercise faith and courage in an apostate world. Deborah and Gideon were both righteous judges whom the Lord raised up to deliver Israel. Deborah’s faith was largely responsible for delivering Israel from a Canaanite army. Gideon’s reliance on the Lord allowed his 300-man army to miraculously defeat the Midianites.

The strength of righteous parents and the consequences of forsaking their ways

In the book of Judges, the children of Israel experienced several cycles of righteousness and apostasy. The cycle begins with **freedom**, degenerates to **apostasy**, which leads to **bondage**, which eventually awakens them to **humility and repentance**, which results in **deliverance** before beginning again.

Judges 2:10, 12, 17, 20, 22 - The rising generation of Israelites “knew not the Lord” and initiated a cycle of apostasy as they left God, worshipped idols, and left both the ways and the covenants of their parents.

Parents’ contribution to their children’s worldliness

Judges 1:21, 27-33; 2:1-4 - The failure of the rising generation of Israelites to remain faithful was **not** entirely their own fault; it was laid by the parents’ failure to drive out the Canaanites. Even though the parents were strong enough to resist the influences of the world around them, their children were not. Some parents today expose their children to worldly influences, making the same error as the parents of that “rising generation” of Israelites.

Discussion: Children sometimes forsake the righteous teachings and ways of their parents, but parents can help their children be faithful. In class, I’ll ask for ideas on how that can be accomplished.

Discussion: Recognizing the early signs of apostasy is crucial to breaking the cycle of apostasy. Think about how we might appropriately help a family member or friend who seems to be falling away from the truth.

Deborah—the strength of a righteous friend

Judges 4:6-7 - The Lord commanded Barak to go toward mount Tabor and take Sisera, the captain of Jabin’s army.

Judges 4:8 – Barak was willing to go to battle against Sisera and his 900 chariots only if Deborah would go with him.

Judges 4:4-9, 14 - Deborah went with Barak to lend strength to him on this mission.

Discussion: We can learn from Deborah that true friends inspire us to obey the Lord and give us the strength to do what is right. Friends help us face difficult challenges or obey the Lord’s commandments. Think about how you can a better friend to others. **Ask yourself:** (1) are you like Deborah to your friends and (2) are these friends like Deborah to you?

Gideon—the strength of faith in God

Judges 6:14-15 – Gideon was commanded to save Israel from the Midianites. Gideon responded that he was poor and “*the least of [his] father’s house*”. He thought he wasn’t the right man to do this.

Judges 6:16-23, 36-40; 7:9-15 - The Lord assured Gideon that He had commanded him to deliver Israel and that He would be with him and help him. He gave Gideon three signs to reassure him.

Judges 7:2 - When Gideon believed that the Lord had truly commanded him to deliver Israel, he went forward with faith. The Lord then told Gideon that his army of 32,000 men should be reduced to 300 to fight the Midianites. This was to be done so that the Israelites would have to acknowledge the Lord's protection, learn to trust him, and be forced to recognize his power, not their own might.

Discussion: Some of us today "vaunt [our]selves". Instead of recognizing that our blessings and strength come from the Lord, some of us claim to have earned all that we have through our own efforts. Scripture study and humble prayer can help us overcome that problem. Share your insight on how the Lord teaches us to trust him and recognize his power rather than our own strengths today.

Judges 7:16-23 - Gideon and his 300 men faced the Midianites with trumpets and lamps, scaring the enemy so badly that they slew each other in confusion and the survivors fled in fear.

Judges 7:20 - Gideon had his men shout, "*The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon*" because Gideon knew—and wanted his men to know—that the Lord was with them. We learn from Gideon that when the Lord commands us to do something, he will help us accomplish it.

Discussion: How has the Lord helped you do something that he asked you to do that was difficult?

Samson—the strength of covenants and the consequences of breaking them

Judges 13:2-3 - Samson's mother, who was barren, learned that she would have a son from an angel.

Judges 13:4-5 - The angel told Samson's mother that he would be a Nazarite and he would begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines. *Nazarites* made covenants with the Lord to separate themselves from the things of the world and become holy. The Nazarite vow is set forth in Numbers 6:2-6, 8.

Judges 13:24-25; 14:5-6, 19; 15:14-15 - The Lord gave Samson spiritual and physical strength to help him fulfill his mission to deliver Israel from the Philistines.

As a Nazarite and a member of the house of Israel, Samson made covenants with the Lord. However, he soon broke his Nazarite vow and his covenants as a member of the house of Israel. Some of the covenants Samson broke are listed below:

Judges 14:1-3 - He married outside the covenant house of Israel

Judges 16:1 - He was immoral with a harlot

Judges 16:4-20 - He had his hair cut.

Judges 16:17-21 – As a consequence of Samson's violation of his covenants, he lost his spiritual and physical strength, and the Philistines blinded him and bound him. Note that Samson's hair was **not** the source of his physical strength. Rather, his hair was a sign of his covenant with the Lord, and when his hair was cut, the Lord took away his physical strength because the covenant was broken. Samson had such great potential. The angel who announced his birth said he would begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines, but he never fulfilled his potential because of his weaknesses.

Discussion: When we violate our covenants the Lord may take away our power and spiritual blessings. Many of us have signs of our covenants with the Lord. Those covenants we make with the Lord should be a source of strength, guidance, and commitment in our lives. Faithful latter-day saints make covenants with the Lord to be obedient, faithful, chaste, and to build up his kingdom on earth.

Those covenants strengthen us by helping us resist Satan's efforts to blind or bind us.

Judges 15:7; 16:1; D&C 3:4 - The Lord blessed him with many gifts, including great physical strength. Inner weaknesses—self-indulgence, immorality, seeking revenge, and violating covenants—caused his downfall.

Judges 16:15-17 - Why, after Samson knew that Delilah had tried three times to betray him, did he tell her the secret of his strength? He was foolish and self-indulgent. Consider **Genesis 39:7-12** and contrast Samson's responses to Delilah with Joseph's responses to Potiphar's wife.

Discussion: How can we resist or overcome persistent temptations? And how can we overcome weaknesses that may hinder us from fulfilling our potential?

Conclusion

In the book of Judges the Israelites fought and won many physical battles against the Canaanites. However, in the book of Judges, the Israelites began to lose spiritual battles, letting themselves be influenced by the Canaanites' worldly practices and false gods. We face similar spiritual battles. We can succeed in these battles as we (1) follow the ways of righteous parents and ancestors, (2) make good friends, (3) increase our faith in the Lord, and (4) keep our covenants.

“All the City ... Doth Know That Thou Art a Virtuous Woman”

Lesson 20 – Ruth; 1 Samuel 1

Introduction

Although the book of Ruth is brief, it shows clearly that Ruth was a righteous woman. This lesson will discuss the righteous qualities of Ruth and two other women, Naomi and Hannah.

Ruth left her home to go to Bethlehem with Naomi.

Ruth 1:1-2 - Naomi and her family went to Moab to live because of a famine.

Ruth 1:6 - Naomi returned to Bethlehem after the deaths of her husband and sons because Bethlehem was her home, and the famine there had ended.

Ruth 1:4 - While living in Moab, Naomi's sons had married Orpah and Ruth, who were women of Moab.

Ruth 1:7-13 - Naomi demonstrated her love and concern for her daughters-in-law when they offered to return to Bethlehem with her.

Discussion: Think about how Naomi's example of concern for her daughters-in-law might help us in our family relationships.

Ruth 1:16-17 - One of Naomi's daughters-in-law, Orpah, returned to her family, but the other, Ruth, insisted on going to Bethlehem with Naomi. We learn from her promise to Naomi that Ruth was loving, loyal, and willing to sacrifice.

Discussion: We can show greater loyalty in our families by being more selfless, following Ruth's example... Ruth, by going to Bethlehem with Naomi, gave up her homeland, family, friends, and religion. She gained in return the gospel of Jesus Christ. We can learn from Ruth about making sacrifices for the gospel.

Ruth 2:2 - After going to Bethlehem, Ruth gleaned to provide food for herself and Naomi. A gleaner was a person who was allowed to gather and keep the grain that was left in the fields after the harvest.

Ruth 2:1, 3 - Ruth gleaned in the fields owned by Boaz.

Ruth 2:5-7, 11 - Boaz was impressed by Ruth because he saw that Ruth was a hard worker. He also knew of all that Ruth had done for Naomi.

Ruth 2:8-9, 14-16 - Boaz showed kindness to Ruth by feeding her and then assuring that she gleaned in fields where his servants purposely left extra barley in the field for her.

Ruth 2:14, 17-18 - Showing her selflessness when she returned from gleaning, Ruth brought the grain that she had gathered home to Naomi, and she also brought Naomi some food she had saved from her noon meal.

Discussion: Think of how selfless acts by others have blessed your life.

Ruth and Boaz married and were blessed with a child.

Ruth 3:1-5 - Naomi counseled Ruth to perform a ritual that she hoped would result in the marriage of Ruth and Boaz. By lying at the feet of Boaz, Ruth would be, in effect, proposing marriage to him. Ruth's obedience to Naomi's counsel revealed her complete trust in Naomi.

Ruth 3:8-15 - Boaz responded with surprise and kindness when he woke up and found Ruth lying at his feet. Note that when Ruth said, *“Spread ... thy skirt over thine handmaid,”* she meant, *“guard me, protect me, care for me.”*

Ruth 3:11-13 - When Ruth's husband died, his nearest male relative was supposed to marry Ruth. Boaz was not the nearest male relative, but he agreed to marry Ruth if the nearest male relative did not wish to do so.

Ruth 3:11 - Ruth had a well-deserved reputation among the people of Bethlehem as a woman of virtue. This reputation benefited her in her relationship with Boaz as he promised to do all that he could for her.

Discussion: It is important that our family members, friends, and neighbors know what we believe in and what values we strive to uphold so that they will trust us and hopefully, follow our example.

Ruth 3:15; 4:1-8 - Boaz inquired of the rightful kinsman, asking if he wanted to marry Ruth. The kinsman declined.

Ruth 4:9-10, 13 - Boaz showed that he was a man of integrity by carrying out his promise to Ruth and honoring his social obligation to her late husband.

Ruth 4:17, 21-22 - David, the famous king of Israel was a descendant of Ruth and Boaz; he was one of their great-grandsons.

Matthew 1:5-16; John 7:42 - Another descendant of Ruth and Boaz was Jesus Christ.

Elder Thomas S. Monson called Ruth a heroine (in *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 108). Elder Monson said Ruth is an example of fidelity and loyalty.

Hannah was blessed with a son, whom she gave to the Lord as she promised.

1 Samuel 1:1-7 - Hannah, wife of Elkanah, was childless. Each year at the temple she wept and prayed for a son.

1 Samuel 1:11 - Hannah promised the Lord that she would give her son to the Lord for his service. From this vow, we learn that Hannah was a woman of great faith and humility.

1 Samuel 1:9-12 – Eli, the priest, witnessed Hannah praying in the temple.

1 Samuel 1:17 - Eli blessed Hannah's righteous desire after learning that he had misjudged her.

1 Samuel 1:18 - Hannah was no longer sad after hearing Eli's words. Of course, comfort from Church leaders also helps us when we are troubled.

1 Samuel 1:15 - Hannah told Eli that she had "*poured out [her] soul before the Lord*".

Discussion: Think about how we can make our personal prayers more sincere and meaningful.

1 Samuel 1:19-20 - In response to Hannah's promise to the Lord, she was blessed with a son, Samuel.

1 Samuel 1:21-28 - Hannah kept her promise after Samuel was born and took him to the temple.

Discussion: The promises we make to the Lord include the covenants we make with him at baptism and in the temple. Hannah's example should help us be diligent in keeping these promises as we remember to give willingly; remembering that everything we have comes from the Lord. How do you think Hannah felt about giving Samuel to the service of the Lord? What does the Lord ask us to give him? What should be our attitude about giving to him?

1 Samuel 1:24-25, 28; 1 Samuel 2:1-2 - When Hannah brought Samuel to the temple; she made offerings and sang praises to the Lord, thanking him for her blessings.

Discussion: Why is it important to remember to thank the Lord for the blessings he gives us?

1 Samuel 1:2; 1 Samuel 2:21 - Hannah waited many years before being blessed with children. Other Biblical characters like Sarah, Abraham's wife, were also blessed for patiently waiting on the Lord.

Discussion: While the world says we should receive the things we want immediately, the Lord knows that sometimes, waiting patiently on the Lord's time is best for us.

Acceptance of converted Gentiles into the covenant of Abraham

Ruth was not an Israelite by birth. When she left Moab to go to Bethlehem with Naomi, she also left her religion and followed the God of Israel, telling Naomi, "*Thy God [shall be] my God*" (Ruth 1:16). By marrying Boaz, Ruth became part of the royal line of Israel, an ancestor of King David and Jesus Christ.

2 Nephi 26:33; Alma 19:36; 3 Nephi 21:6 - Ruth's conversion and acceptance into the house of Israel reflects Christ's attitude toward those who wish to join his Church—he welcomes them all, considers each equal with others, pours out his spirit on them, extends his arm to all, and adopts them into his family.

Discussion: As the Lord welcomes converts, how can we help converts feel welcome in the Church?

Conclusion

Righteous qualities—faith, loyalty, fidelity, selflessness, humility, patience, devotion, virtue, trustworthiness, diligence—have been exemplified by Ruth, Naomi, and Hannah in the scriptures we reviewed today. If we have learned from these scriptures, we will try to emulate the righteous qualities demonstrated by Ruth, Naomi, and Hannah because developing these qualities will bring us closer to our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Resolving worries and troubles by going to the temple

Elder John A. Widtsoe said: "*I believe that the busy person ... who has his worries and troubles, can solve his problems better and more quickly in the house of the Lord than anywhere else. If he will [do] the temple work for himself and for his dead, he will confer a mighty blessing upon those who have gone before, and ... a blessing will come to him, for at the most unexpected moments, in or out of the temple will come to him, as a revelation, the solution of the problems that vex his life. That is the gift that comes to those who enter the temple properly*" (quoted by David B. Haight, *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 61).

“God Will Honor Those Who Honor Him”

Lesson 21 – 1 Samuel 2-3; 8

Introduction

Today’s scriptures will help us understand the blessings of honoring and pleasing the Lord above ourselves, others, or the world.

The sons of Eli honored themselves above the Lord. (1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22-25)

Hophni and Phinehas were sons of Eli, the high priest, and although they were priests themselves, they were wicked. When Israelites came to offer sacrifices at the tabernacle, Hophni and Phinehas forcibly took the flesh of the sacrificial animals before the fat portions had been burned on the altar. They also took some of the flesh that the offerer was boiling for the sacrificial meal (1 Samuel 2:12-17). These were serious transgressions of God’s laws, equivalent to robbing God. (1 Samuel 2:22) Eli’s sons also committed the extremely serious sin of seducing women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle.

1 Samuel 2:17, 24 tells us the effect the actions of Eli’s sons had on other people in Israel.

The actions of Eli’s sons suggest that they chose to honor themselves rather than God.

In some areas of our lives we sometimes honor and please ourselves rather than the Lord as we fail to choose righteously in entertainment, Sabbath observance, morality, fasting, and Church callings. Each time we choose to honor ourselves rather than God, there is a consequence.

Eli honored his sons above the Lord. (1 Samuel 2:27-36; 1 Samuel 3:12-14)

1 Samuel 2:22-25 – The aged Eli bore a priesthood and patriarchal responsibility when he learned of the wickedness of his sons. He verbally chastised them for their wickedness, but his sons ignored him.

1 Samuel 2:27-29 - After reprimanding his sons, Eli did nothing further to correct the terrible sins in his family and at the tabernacle. As a result, a man of God came and chastised him, telling him that he had honored his sons more than God.

1 Samuel 2:30-36 - The man of God said the house of Eli would be rejected and another priest raised up. Sometimes we honor other people more than God if...

- We allow our peers to persuade us to do something we know is wrong.
 - We act dishonestly because we are afraid of what other people might think of us.
 - We fail to correct family members or friends in their wrongdoing to maintain good relations with them.
- President Joseph F. Smith taught: *“There should [not] be any of us so unwisely indulgent, so thoughtless and so shallow in our affection for our children that we dare not check them in a wayward course, in wrong-doing and in their foolish love for the things of the world more than for the things of righteousness, for fear of offending them”* (Gospel Doctrine, 5th ed. [1939], 286).

As parents, we must fulfill our responsibility toward wayward children in a spirit of love—but we must not be indulgent toward them in their sins. Of course, it is the responsibility of children to listen to counsel and be obedient as their parents strive to lead them in righteousness.

Samuel honored the Lord. (1 Samuel 3)

The boy Samuel was serving in the temple after his mother, Hannah, had given him to the Lord’s service, as she had promised.

1 Samuel 3:4 – The Lord called to Samuel in the night.

1 Samuel 3:5-6, 8 – The child Samuel first thought that it was Eli who was calling him.

1 Samuel 3:8-9 – Finally, Eli realized that it was the Lord calling Samuel.

The Lord communicates with us most often through the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. To prepare ourselves to receive and understand communications from the Lord, we too must be willing to listen for that still small voice with a willing, obedient attitude. By being willing to listen and obey, Samuel chose to honor the Lord rather than himself.

1 Samuel 2:35 – The Lord promised to raise up a faithful priest who would do the Lord’s will.

1 Samuel 3:4, 10 – When the Lord called Samuel, he answered, *“Here am I”* and *“Speak; for thy servant heareth”*.

1 Samuel 2:30 - The Lord promised to honor those who honored him

1 Samuel 3:19 - The Lord honored Samuel as a prophet and all Israel knew that he spoke for the Lord.

The Lord will honor us if we honor him as Samuel did and will give us opportunities to serve him—and as we serve righteously, He will make his support obvious to those around us.

The Israelites honored the world. (1 Samuel 8)

1 Samuel 8:1 - During Samuel's ministry, the Israelites were governed by judges.

1 Samuel 12:12 - Israel was supposed to regard the Lord as their king.

1 Samuel 8:5, 20 - The children of Israel wanted a king so that he could lead them in battle and so that they would be like the other nations.

1 Samuel 8:7 - In asking for a king "like all the nations," Israel rejected the Lord and his ways.

1 Samuel 8:9-18 - The Lord instructed Samuel to tell the Israelites what to expect from a king no matter how carefully they chose him.

1 Samuel 8:19-22 - The response of the Israelites to Samuel's warnings was stubbornness and rejection. In demanding to establish a monarchy, the Israelites chose to honor the world.

Sometimes we (or our family members) show a desire to be "like all the nations" when we/they choose to follow worldly standards of behavior, speech, and appearance (tattoos, piercings, etc.)

Psalms 47:7; 89:18; 149:2 - The Lord Jesus Christ is our true king, just as he was king of the Israelites. The knowledge that the Lord is our king should affect our attitudes toward the ways of the world and our daily behavior.

Value of the things we choose

1 Samuel 8:11-17 - Sometimes we exchange things of great value for things of lesser value. Eli and his sons gave up their priesthood callings and the support of the Lord because of their choices. Samuel told the Israelites they would give up many blessings if they wanted a king, but sometimes we give up greater eternal blessings for things of lesser worldly value.

"Whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies"

President Thomas S. Monson made the following statement to show how the Lord honors those who honor Him: *"Some of you may be shy by nature or consider yourselves inadequate to respond affirmatively to a calling. Remember that this work is not yours and mine alone. It is the Lord's work, and when we are on the Lord's errand, we are entitled to the Lord's help. Remember that whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies"* (Ensign, May 1996, 44).

Then President Monson told the following story: *"Should we feel [an] assignment too arduous or time-consuming, let me share with you the experience of a faithful home teacher and his companion in what was then East Germany. "Brother Johann Denndorfer had been converted to the Church in Germany, and following World War II he found himself virtually a prisoner in his own land—the land of Hungary in the city of Debrecen. How he wanted to visit the temple! How he desired to receive his spiritual blessings! Request after request to journey to the temple in Switzerland had been denied, and he almost despaired. Then his home teacher visited. Brother Walter Krause went from the northeastern portion of Germany all the way to Hungary. He had said to his home teaching companion, 'Would you like to go home teaching with me this week?' His companion said, 'When will we leave?' 'Tomorrow,' replied Brother Krause. 'When will we come back?' asked the companion. 'Oh, in about a week—if we get back then!' And away they went to visit Brother Denndorfer. He had not had home teachers since before the war. Now, when he saw the servants of the Lord, he was overwhelmed. He did not shake hands with them; rather, he went to his bedroom and took from a secret hiding place his tithing that he had saved from the day he became a member of the Church and returned to Hungary. He presented the tithing to his home teachers and said: 'Now I am current with the Lord. Now I feel worthy to shake the hands of servants of the Lord!' "Brother Krause asked him about his desire to attend the temple in Switzerland. Brother Denndorfer said: 'It's no use. I have tried and tried. The government has even confiscated my Church books, my greatest treasure.' "Brother Krause, a patriarch, provided Brother Denndorfer with a patriarchal blessing. At the conclusion of the blessing, he said to Brother Denndorfer, 'Approach the government again about going to Switzerland.' And Brother Denndorfer submitted the request once again to the authorities. This time approval came, and with joy Brother Denndorfer went to the Swiss Temple and stayed a month. He received his own endowment, his deceased wife was sealed to him, and he was able to accomplish the work for hundreds of his ancestors. He returned to his home renewed in body and in spirit"* (Ensign, May 1996, 45-46).

Conclusion

All of us must choose each day whom we will honor—ourselves, the world, or the Lord.

“The Lord Looketh on the Heart”

Lesson 22 – 1 Samuel 9-11; 13; 15-17

Introduction

“Hyssop” – can you guess what this word means? After giving your best guess, if you wanted to know the correct definition, you’d go to the Bible Dictionary, wouldn’t you? Guessing at the definition of an unfamiliar word is like making decisions based only on our own understanding. **Proverbs 3:5-6** says: **“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths”**. Just as we would turn to a trusted source to learn the correct definition of an unfamiliar word, we need to trust the Lord and seek his will to make correct decisions in our lives. This lesson contrasts the experiences of two men, Saul and David, to teach the importance of trusting the Lord and seeking his guidance when we make decisions. If we learn as we should from today’s scriptures, we will resolve to trust in the Lord rather than our own understanding.

Saul sought guidance from Samuel and was anointed to be king. (1 Samuel 9-11)

The Israelites wanted a king like those of the nations around them. Yielding to the Israelites’ request, the Lord told Samuel to anoint Saul as Israel’s first king.

1 Samuel 9:2 - Saul was *“a choice young man, ... and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he”*. Saul’s actions before he was anointed king and shortly thereafter demonstrated his good qualities:

- **1 Samuel 9:3-4** – He was diligent in his search for his father’s donkeys.
- **1 Samuel 9:5-10** – He listened to and followed the wise counsel of his father’s servant
- **1 Samuel 9:18-25** - He trusted the prophet Samuel and communed with him
- **1 Samuel 9:20-21** – He was humble.
- **1 Samuel 10:6-10** – He was spiritually reborn, and he prophesied.
- **1 Samuel 11:11-13** – He forgave his critics.
- **1 Samuel 11:13** - He recognized the help of the Lord in Israel’s victory over the Ammonites.

Saul offers a burnt offering without the proper authority.

Two years after Saul was anointed king, the Philistines gathered a mighty army to fight against Israel. Saul’s men were so afraid that many of them hid and scattered.

1 Samuel 13:7-8 - Saul wanted Samuel to offer sacrifices to the Lord in behalf of the people.

1 Samuel 13:9 - When Samuel did not come at the appointed time, Saul offered the sacrifices himself even though he did not have the priesthood authority to do so.

Elder James E. Talmage wrote, *“Saul prepared the burnt offering himself, forgetting that though he occupied the throne, wore the crown, and bore the scepter, [he had] no right to officiate ... in the Priesthood of God; and for this and other instances of his unrighteous presumption he was rejected of God and another was made king in his place”* (*The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. [1924], 185).

1 Samuel 13:10-14 - Samuel’s response to Saul’s offering an unauthorized sacrifice was a pronouncement that Saul’s foolishness and disobedience would end his kingdom.

1 Samuel 13:14 - Saul’s offering an unauthorized sacrifice revealed that he was no longer *“a man after [the Lord’s] own heart”*. He had grown impatient, failed to trust the Lord, and disobeyed. In addition, his presuming the authority to offer sacrifice suggests that he had an exaggerated opinion of his own power and importance. Sometimes our own impatience with the Lord or his servants can cause us to fail, but we must be aware that there are consequences accompanying such impatience. We must come to trust the Lord fully even if his timetable is different than ours.

Saul disobeyed the Lord in the battle with the Amalekites and was rejected as king. (1 Samuel 15)

1 Samuel 15:1-3 - The Lord commanded Saul to smite and **destroy** the Amalekites and all they had.

1 Samuel 15:4-9 – Instead of obeying, Saul saved some animals to sacrifice.

1 Samuel 15:11 - Saul’s actions revealed that he followed his own judgment rather than the Lord’s will.

1 Samuel 15:13-15, 20-21, 24 - Saul tried to justify his disobedience in saving the best of the Amalekites’ animals by blaming his people for wanting to save the animals. According to Saul, it was his people wanted to save the Amalekites’ animals for sacrifice, not him.

Sometimes we try to justify disobeying the Lord by telling ourselves, “It’s just a little sin,” “I’m obeying the spirit of the law rather than the letter of the law,” “It won’t hurt anyone,” “I’ll try it just once,” “Other people are doing it,” or “That commandment doesn’t apply to me.”

1 Samuel 15:22 - Samuel responded to Saul’s explanation with counsel that obedience is more prized than sacrifice. Samuel’s words apply to us when we try to follow our judgment rather than the Lord’s.

1 Samuel 15:23 - When reprimanding Saul for being stubborn and rejecting the word of the Lord, Samuel told him, “*Stubbornness is as ... idolatry*”. If we reject God’s instruction, we are not worshipping him.

1 Samuel 15:23, 26, 28 - The result of Saul’s becoming stubborn and rebellious was that his kingdom was taken from him at the Lord’s direction. The results of our being stubborn and rebellious can be just as damaging to us—we may lose our eternal kingdom.

The Lord chooses David as king. (1 Samuel 16)

Although Samuel anointed David to be king, David did not become king until Saul died many years later.

1 Samuel 16:6-7 - Samuel learned the Lord’s method of choosing an individual to serve. Elder Marvin J. Ashton said: “*We ... tend to evaluate others on the basis of physical, outward appearance: their ‘good looks,’ their social status, their family pedigrees, their degrees, or their economic situations. The Lord, however, has a different standard by which he measures a person. ... He does not take a tape measure around the person’s head to determine his mental capacity, nor his chest to determine his manliness, but He measures the heart as an indicator of the person’s capacity and potential to bless others*” (Ensign, Nov. 1988, 15).

1 Samuel 16:14 - Because Saul had been disobedient, the Spirit of the Lord departed from him.

1 Samuel 16:18 - David qualified as a leader because he was *valiant, prudent, and the Lord was with him*.

David slays Goliath in the strength of the Lord. (1 Samuel 17)

1 Samuel 17:8-9 - The Israelites would gain or lose their freedom in the fight with Goliath.

Saul and his army were afraid to fight Goliath because they did not think they could defeat Goliath because of his size, strength, armor, and weapons.

1 Samuel 17:32-37, 45-47 - David got the courage to fight Goliath because he recognized that the Lord had delivered him from a lion and a bear, and he trusted the Lord to help him fight Goliath.

As a youth, David’s victories over a lion and a bear helped prepare him for the greater challenge of Goliath.

Each day we face challenges that prepare us for greater challenges. Our responses to these challenges affect our ability to battle the Goliaths that may come later. As we defeat the lions and bears in our lives, we will develop the confidence, character, and faith to defeat our Goliaths.

President Gordon B. Hinckley said: “*There are Goliaths all around you, hulking giants with evil intent to destroy you. These are not nine-foot-tall men, but they are men and institutions that control attractive but evil things that may challenge and weaken and destroy you. Included in these are beer and other liquors and tobacco. Those who market these products would like to enslave you into their use. There are drugs of various kinds which, I am told, are relatively easy to obtain in many high schools. For those who peddle them, this is a multimillion-dollar industry, a giant web of evil. There is pornography, seductive and interesting and inviting. It has become a giant industry, producing magazines, films, and other materials designed to take your money and lead you toward activities that would destroy you. The giants who are behind these efforts are formidable and skillful. They have gained vast experience in the war they are carrying on. They would like to ensnare you. It is almost impossible to entirely avoid exposure to their products. You see these materials on all sides. But you need not fear if you have the slingshot of truth in your hands. You have been counseled and taught and advised. You have the stones of virtue and honor and integrity to use against these enemies who would like to conquer you. Insofar as you are concerned, you can hit them ‘between the eyes,’ to use a figurative expression. You can triumph over them by disciplining yourselves to avoid them. You can say to the whole lot of them as David said to Goliath, ‘Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.’ Victory will be yours. ... You have His power within you to sustain you. You have the right to ministering angels about you to protect you. Do not let Goliath frighten you. Stand your ground and hold your place, and you will be triumphant*” (Ensign, May 1983, 46, 51).

Conclusion

Trust and obey the Lord. By doing so you will grow stronger and have the Lord’s assurance that he will help you triumph over personal Goliaths. The Lord looks upon our hearts, not upon our wealth or position or conformity to popular standards.

“The Lord Be Between Thee and Me For Ever”

Lesson 23 – 1 Samuel 18-20; 23-24

Introduction

What are some of the qualities you look for in a friend? Loyalty, integrity, unselfishness, kindness, and charity? Part of this lesson teaches us to be true to our friends, as Jonathan and David were, and to avoid being consumed by jealousy and hatred, as Saul was.

Jonathan and David made a covenant of friendship. Saul became jealous of David and tried to kill him. (1 Samuel 18:1-16)

David quickly became a hero after he killed Goliath. King Saul and the entire kingdom honored him. However, none was as true to David as was Jonathan, Saul's son.

1 Samuel 18:1, 3 - Jonathan loved David as much as he loved himself in spite of the fact that it would have been easy for Jonathan to feel jealous of David for these reasons:

- **1 Samuel 16:6-13** - As Saul's son, Jonathan was next in line to be king. However, the prophet Samuel had anointed David to become the next king.
- **1 Samuel 14:1-16** - While David was greatly honored by the people for his success in battle, Jonathan received little attention for his own success on the battlefield.

1 Samuel 18:1, 3 - Jonathan was not jealous of David or threatened by him because they were true friends who would not let jealousy arise between them.

1 Samuel 18:4 - Jonathan demonstrated his support for David by giving him his royal robe and weapons.

1 Samuel 18:2, 5 - King Saul was grateful to and proud of David after the slaying of Goliath, so Saul took David into his home and set him over his armies.

1 Samuel 18:5 - David demonstrated his loyalty to King Saul by serving him wisely and faithfully.

1 Samuel 18:6-9 - Saul was prompted to turn against David when the people gave David greater praise than they gave to Saul. Saul found it impossible to be happy about the success of David. That jealousy and pride he felt affected his spiritual well being.

President Ezra Taft Benson said: *“Saul became an enemy to David through pride. He was jealous because the crowds of Israelite women were singing that ‘Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands’ (1 Samuel 18:7, see also 1 Samuel 18:6,8). The proud stand more in fear of men’s judgment than of God’s judgment. ... ‘What will men think of me?’ weighs heavier than ‘What will God think of me?’ ... Fear of men’s judgment manifests itself in competition for men’s approval. The proud love ‘the praise of men more than the praise of God’ (John 12:42-43). Our motives for the things we do are where the sin is manifest. Jesus said He did ‘always those things’ that pleased God (John 8:29). Would we not do well to have the pleasing of God as our motive rather than to try to elevate ourselves above our brother and outdo another? ‘Some prideful people are not so concerned as to whether their wages meet their needs as they are that their wages are more than someone else’s. Their reward is being a cut above the rest. ... When pride has a hold on our hearts, we lose our independence of the world and deliver our freedoms to the bondage of men’s judgment. The world shouts louder than the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. The reasoning of men overrides the revelations of God, and the proud let go of the iron rod” (Ensign, May 1989, 5).*

1 Samuel 18:5, 14-16 - David continued to act wisely in all his ways in Saul's behalf after the Lord blessed him with success on the battlefield. By being wise and having integrity, he maintained favor in the sight of the Lord.

From his example, we should remember to “behave [ourselves] wisely” when we are successful in our undertakings, whether temporal or spiritual.

Saul failed in three more attempts to take David’s life. (1 Samuel 18:17-30; 19:1-18)

Saul offered to let David marry one of his daughters if David would fight the Philistines.

1 Samuel 18:20-25 - Saul's real motive in offering him one of his daughters as a wife was to ensnare him. He hoped that the Philistines would kill David. Saul wanted a hundred Philistines killed as a dowry for his daughter's hand in marriage.

1 Samuel 19:1-7 – As Saul's jealousy and anger grew, he tried to get Jonathan, among others, to kill David. Jonathan resisted and persuaded Saul to abandon his plan to slay David. Because of Jonathan's efforts, Saul agreed to accept David back into his house.

We see from this incident what it means to be a true friend. Think about your friends and how they are true to you. Consider also how you are a true friend unto them.

1 Samuel 19:9-10 - Despite Jonathan's efforts to change Saul's feelings toward David, Saul continued to seek David's life after an evil spirit came upon him. Saul's javelin missed its mark and David escaped.

1 Samuel 19:11-18 - Michal, David's wife, showed that she was true to her husband by helping him escape and delaying Saul's messengers overnight to give David ample time to escape.

David and Jonathan renewed their covenant of friendship. Jonathan saved David's life.

1 Samuel 20:1 – David was bewildered by Saul's hatred and efforts to kill him because he knew there was no justification for such hatred.

1 Samuel 20:2-4, 13-17, 23, 24-42 - Jonathan continued to show his friendship while Saul sought David's life by trying to change Saul's mind and keeping David informed of Saul's doings.

1 Samuel 20:23 - Faith in God influenced the friendship of Jonathan and David. Their covenant of friendship was based on gospel principles. Our love of God affects our love of others. If we place loyalty to God first in our lives, if our friends do things that are wrong we will lovingly try to help our friends change. If our friends ask us to do things that are wrong, we will not do unrighteous things at their request, regardless of the social consequences, and we will try to influence our friends to make righteous choices.

1 Samuel 20:24-33* (cited above) - King Saul responded to David's absence and Jonathan's defense of his friend with anger.

1 Samuel 20:35-42* (cited above) - Jonathan warned David to flee from Saul by meeting him in a field where he practiced his archery skills.

Saul was consumed by hatred for David. David spared Saul's life. (1 Samuel 23-24)

1 Samuel 23:1-5 - David was blessed with continued success on the battlefield against the Philistines as he followed the direction of the Lord.

1 Samuel 23:7-13 - David had to leave the city of Keilah after he had saved its people from the Philistines because he was told that Saul was coming to slay him and his men.

1 Samuel 23:10 - When Saul learned that David was in Keilah; he prepared his armies to destroy the entire city. Saul had changed from a righteous king to someone who was willing to destroy an entire city in order to kill one person. His jealousy and hatred was so consuming that he had been completely overwhelmed by them. We need to rid ourselves of jealousy or hatred before those conditions overwhelm us and cause us to sin.

1 Samuel 23:16 - When David was hiding from Saul, Jonathan visited David and "*strengthened his hand in God*". Think about what that might mean and consider how you might strengthen your friends in God. (Do you encourage your friends to continue in righteous living during their trials and tribulations?)

1 Samuel 24:1-3 - During another attempt to find and kill David, Saul stopped to rest in a cave.

1 Samuel 24:4 - David's men, when they found Saul, counseled David that the Lord had delivered Saul into his hands, so he could do with him whatever he wished.

1 Samuel 24:4-5 – Rather than harm his master, David cut off the hem of Saul's robe—the portion of the robe that symbolized authority.

1 Samuel 24:6-12 - David refused to harm Saul because Saul was "*the Lord's anointed*".

1 Samuel 24:12-15; Mormon 8:20 - David's example teaches us about controlling the desire for revenge and about responding to those who do evil to us. We should let the Lord protect us and He will judge those who seek to harm us.

1 Samuel 24:16-19 - When David spared his life, Saul wept and confessed that David was far more righteous than he. He confessed that he had sought David's life while David had let him go when it would have been easy for David to slay him.

Conclusion

The story of Jonathan and David reminds us that true friendship and love bring us closer to our friends and to God. The story of Saul reminds us that jealousy and hatred can consume us and lead us away from our friends and from God. Be true to your friends so you can say to them, "*The Lord be between thee and me for ever*" (1 Samuel 20:23).

“Create in Me a Clean Heart”

Lesson 24 – 2 Samuel 11-12; Psalm 51

Introduction

What should you do when an unclean thought enters your mind? Dismiss it immediately! Today our lesson discussion will deal with the consequences of dwelling on unclean thoughts and how to free ourselves from them. The intent is that we will resolve to be chaste in thought and action and repent.

Background: Soon after David spared Saul’s life, Saul sought David’s life one more time. Again David had the opportunity to kill the king, but he refused to do so. Battles continued between the people of Judah and the surrounding nations, and Saul and Jonathan were killed in one of those battles. David succeeded Saul as king and became one of the greatest kings in the history of Israel. He united the tribes into one nation, secured possession of the land that had been promised to his people, and set up a government based on God’s law. However, the last 20 years of his life were marred by the sinful decisions that are discussed in this lesson.

David committed adultery with Bathsheba and arranged for the death of her husband, Uriah.

2 Samuel 11:2 - David was walking on his roof when he saw Bathsheba and was tempted to commit adultery with her. David should have looked away and gone inside when he saw Bathsheba.

2 Samuel 11:2-4 - David sent for Bathsheba to come to his house and that led him to sin with her.

2 Samuel 11:6-13 – When David learned that Bathsheba was with child, he tried to get Uriah, Bathsheba’s husband, to return home to her. Then it would appear that the unborn child was Uriah’s.

2 Samuel 11:11 - David’s plan failed because Uriah would not return home then because he was loyal to his battlefield companions and felt that he should stay with them.

2 Samuel 11:14-17 - David committed a more serious sin in an attempt to hide his immorality.

Elder Richard G. Scott said: *“Do not take comfort in the fact that your transgressions are not known by others. That is like an ostrich with his head buried in the sand. He sees only darkness and feels comfortably hidden. In reality he is ridiculously conspicuous. Likewise our every act is seen by our Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son. They know everything about us. ...If you have seriously transgressed, you will not find any lasting satisfaction or comfort in what you have done. Excusing transgression with a cover-up may appear to fix the problem, but it does not. The tempter is intent on making public your most embarrassing acts at the most harmful time. Lies weave a pattern that is ever more confining and becomes a trap that Satan will spring to your detriment”* (Ensign, May 1995, 77).

Dismissing unclean thoughts from our minds

To avoid being tempted to commit sexual sins, these are some things to avoid: Unclean or immoral thoughts; television shows, movies, magazines, books, and music that are pornographic or suggestive in any way; unwholesome dating activities, flirting after marriage, places or activities that will not enable you to have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.

Choose to fill your mind with uplifting thoughts; choose media that will inspire you to do good; follow the dating standards taught by latter-day prophets; love your spouse with all your heart; continue to “court” (develop your relationship with) your spouse; ensure that the places you go and the activities you participate in will enable you to have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.

Elder Boyd K. Packer spoke about how to dismiss unclean thoughts that have entered our minds uninvited: *“The mind is like a stage. Except when we are asleep, the curtain is always up. There is always some act being performed on that stage. It may be a comedy, a tragedy, interesting or dull, good or bad; but always there is some act playing on the stage of the mind. “Have you noticed that without any real intent on your part, in the middle of almost any performance, a shady little thought may creep in from the wings and attract your attention? These delinquent thoughts will try to upstage everybody. If you permit them to go on, all thoughts of any virtue will leave the stage. You will be left, because you consented to it, to the influence of unrighteous thoughts. “If you yield to them, they will enact for you on the stage of your mind anything to the limits of your toleration. They may enact a theme of bitterness, jealousy, or hatred. It may be vulgar, immoral, even depraved. When they have the stage, if you let them, they will devise the most clever persuasions to hold your attention. They can make it interesting all right, even convince you that it is innocent—for they are but thoughts. “What do you do at a time like that, when the stage of your mind is commandeered by theimps of unclean thinking, whether they be the gray ones that seem almost clean or the filthy ones which leave no room for doubt? If you can control your thoughts, you can overcome habits, even degrading personal habits. If you can learn to master them, you will have a happy life. “This is what I would*

teach you. Choose from among the sacred music of the Church a favorite hymn, one with words that are uplifting and music that is reverent, one that makes you feel something akin to inspiration. Go over it in your mind carefully. Memorize it. Even though you [may] have had no musical training, you can think through a hymn. “Now, use this hymn as the place for your thoughts to go. Make it your emergency channel. Whenever you find these shady actors have slipped from the sidelines of your thinking onto the stage of your mind, put on this record, as it were. As the music begins and as the words form in your thoughts, the unworthy ones will slip shamefully away. It will change the whole mood on the stage of your mind. Because it is uplifting and clean, the baser thoughts will disappear. For while virtue, by choice, will not associate with filth, evil cannot tolerate the presence of light. “In due time you will find yourself, on occasion, humming the music inwardly. As you retrace your thoughts, you discover some influence from the world about you encouraged an unworthy thought to move on stage in your mind, and the music almost automatically began. “Once you learn to clear the stage of your mind of unworthy thoughts, keep it busy with learning worthwhile things. Change your environment so that you have things about you that will inspire good and uplifting thoughts. Keep busy with things that are righteous” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1976, 99-100).

David was told that he would be punished because of his sins. (2 Samuel 12:1-23)

2 Samuel 12:1-6 - The prophet Nathan told the *parable of the ewe lamb* to illustrate how displeased the Lord was with David. David was indignant about the rich man’s actions against the poor man in the parable and said that the rich man should make fourfold restitution and forfeit his life.

2 Samuel 12:7-9 - David’s actions been like the rich man’s. As Nathan said: “*Thou art the man!*”

2 Samuel 12:13 - David reacted to the Lord’s rebuke by acknowledging his sins.

David failed to recognize that he was represented by the rich man in the parable. Sometimes we are unable or unwilling to recognize our own sinfulness.

2 Samuel 12:10-14 – As the consequences of David’s sins, the prophecies in 2 Samuel 12:15-23 and subsequent chapters of 2 Samuel and 1 Kings were fulfilled. Adultery is a serious sin, but David forfeited his exaltation because the Lord held him accountable for the murder of Uriah.

President Marion G. Romney said: “*David, ... though highly favored of the Lord (he was, in fact, referred to as a man after God’s own heart), yielded to temptation. His unchastity led to murder, and as a consequence, he lost his families and his exaltation*” (Ensign, May 1979, 42).

There are immediate consequences of immorality today and there are some long-term effects for the unrepentant. The Lord’s laws of chastity have not changed over the centuries.

A repentant David sought forgiveness. (Psalm 51)

In a psalm to the Lord, David expressed a desire to help others repent, saying, “*I [will] teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee*” (Psalm 51:13). Even though David forfeited his exaltation because he arranged the death of Uriah, we can learn from his repentant attitude as he sought forgiveness for the sin of adultery. His words in Psalm 51 teach many aspects of true repentance.

Psalm 51:1-3 - David first acknowledged God and His mercy; then he acknowledged his own sinfulness.

Psalm 51:16-17 - We must sacrifice to receive forgiveness of our sins. Our sacrifice is “*a broken and a contrite heart*”.

Psalm 51:3, 10 - Our sins are “*ever before [us]*” before being forgiven, but cleaned away when we repent.

Psalm 51:9; Isaiah 43:25; D&C 58:42 - God no longer remembers our sins after he has forgiven us.

Psalm 51:1-2, 7, 9-10, 12 - David described forgiveness as a cleansing, a restoration, and a deliverance.

Hope for the repentant

It is never too late to repent, as Elder Boyd K. Packer taught: “*The discouraging idea that a mistake (or even a series of them) makes it everlastingly too late, does not come from the Lord. He has said that if we will repent, not only will He forgive us our transgressions, but He will forget them and remember our sins no more. ... Repentance is like soap; it can wash sin away. Ground-in dirt may take the strong detergent of discipline to get the stains out, but out they will come*” (Ensign, May 1989, 59).

Conclusion

No matter how successful or strong we may be, we are not above temptation. We should make any necessary changes in our lives that will help us be chaste in thought and action. To help, we should remember our love for Jesus Christ and be grateful for his Atonement. Because of the Atonement, we can be forgiven of our sins.

“Let Every Thing That Hath Breath Praise the Lord”

Lesson 25 – Psalms

Introduction

What gifts and opportunities from the Lord are you especially grateful for? How would your life be different without these blessings? Many of the psalms express gratitude for blessings the Lord has given. Part of this lesson focuses on those blessings and on what we can do to show our gratitude for them. We should show our gratitude for the Savior and for the many blessings that he and our Heavenly Father have given us.

Psalms is a collection of poems, many written by David, which were originally sung as praises or petitions to God. This book is like a hymnal from ancient Israel. Its lyrics constitute some of the world’s best inspirational literature, expressing faith in the Lord and an earnest desire to live righteously.

Prophecies of the life and mission of Jesus Christ

Many psalms prophesy of Christ’s mission as the Messiah. The resurrected Savior declared, “*All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me*” (Luke 24:44). A few of the following prophecies about Christ are from the book of Psalms:

Prophecy	Fulfillment
Psalms 107:23-30	Matthew 8:23-27. Jesus calmed the winds and the waves.
Psalms 69:8	John 1:11; John 7:5. Jesus was not received by his own people.
Psalms 41:9; Psalms 55:12-14	John 13:18, John 13:21. Jesus was betrayed by a friend.
Psalms 69:20	Mark 14:32-41. Jesus suffered alone in Gethsemane.
Psalms 22:7-8	Matthew 27:39-43. Jesus was mocked.
Psalms 22:16	Mark 15:25. Jesus was crucified.
Psalms 22:18	Matthew 27:35. The soldiers cast lots for Christ’s clothes.
Psalms 22:1	Matthew 27:46. Jesus asked the Father why he had forsaken him.
Psalms 69:21	John 19:28-30. Jesus was given vinegar for his thirst
Psalms 34:20	John 19:33-36. None of Jesus’ bones was broken.
Psalms 31:5	Luke 23:46. Jesus commended his spirit to the Father and died.
Psalms 16:10	Acts 2:31-32; Acts 13:34-35. The Savior’s flesh did not see corruption, being raised up in the Resurrection.

Jesus Christ is the only person whose birth, life, death, and resurrection were prophesied before his birth. Such detailed prophecies were given about the Savior’s life to make it clear that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Savior of the world. These prophecies were a blessing to those who received them as they helped people learn of the Savior and gain testimonies of him even before he was born. The prophecies also helped some people recognize him when he came.

“The Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee” (Psalm 116:7).

In addition to prophesying of the Savior’s life and mission, many psalms express gratitude for blessings such as the creation of heaven and earth; the Savior’s mercy, forgiveness, and love; the scriptures; and the temple.

The Creation of Heaven and Earth

Psalms 19:1; 104:5-7, 14, 24; 136:3-9 express gratitude to the Lord for the creation of heaven and earth:

The Savior’s Mercy, Forgiveness, and Love

Psalms 23; 51; 59:16; 78:38; 86:5, 13; 100:4-5; 103:2-4, 8-11, 17-18 - Some of these psalms express gratitude to the Savior for his mercy, forgiveness, and love:

The Scriptures

Psalms 19:7-11; 119 - These psalms express gratitude to the Lord for the scriptures:

Psalms 19:7-10 - Words David used to describe the scriptures included *law, testimony, statutes, commandment, and judgments*. Adjectives used described the scriptures include *perfect, sure, right, pure, true, and righteous*. The scriptures are also described as more desired than gold and sweeter than honey.

Psalm 19:7-11 - Blessings the scriptures bring into our lives, as recorded in these verses include: converting our souls (verse 7), making the simple wise (verse 7), causing our hearts to rejoice (verse 8), enlightening our eyes (verse 8), giving us warning (verse 11).

Psalm 119:97 - The Psalmist exclaimed to the Lord, *“O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day”*. Think seriously about how you might develop such a love for the scriptures.

Psalm 119:105 - The scriptures like *“a lamp unto [our] feet, and a light unto [our] path”*.

The Temple

Psalm 5:7; 15:1-3; 24; 27:4; 65:4; 84:1-2,4,10-12; 122; 134 teach about the temple.

“What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?”

In Psalm 116:12, David asked, *“What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?”*

David’s answer to his own this question is listed below:

Psalm 116:13 *“I will take the cup of salvation”*.

Psalm 116:13 *“I will ... call upon the name of the Lord”*.

Psalm 116:16 *“O Lord, truly I am thy servant”*.

Psalm 116:17 *“I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving”*.

Psalm 116:18-19 *“I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the Lord’s house”*.

We too can accept the gospel, pray, serve, be grateful, and attend the temple.

“Trust in the Lord”

“Trust in the Lord” is one of the most common admonitions in the book of Psalms (Psalm 4:5; Psalm 5:11; Psalm 9:10; Psalm 18:2; Psalm 56:11; Psalm 62:8; Psalm 118:8-9). Think about how you place your trust in the Lord and the blessings you received as you trusted him.

Blessings of singing hymns

Main topics of our latter-day hymns include the Savior, our duties as Church members, enduring to the end, faith, home and family, love, missionary work, prayer, priesthood, prophets, the restoration of the gospel, the sacrament, service, enduring trials, and Zion.

Some of the following are ways that singing hymns can bless us include: Hymns lift our spirits, inspire us to live more righteously, remind us of our blessings, give us an opportunity to sing praises to the Lord, give us a way to bear testimony, help us recommit ourselves to the Lord, help us feel the Spirit, help us be more in tune with our Heavenly Father, and help us learn and teach the gospel.

The First Presidency said: *“Inspirational music is an essential part of our church meetings. The hymns invite the Spirit of the Lord, create a feeling of reverence, unify us as members, and provide a way for us to offer praises to the Lord. Some of the greatest sermons are preached by the singing of hymns. Hymns move us to repentance and good works, build testimony and faith, comfort the weary, console the mourning, and inspire us to endure to the end”* (Hymns, ix).

Matthew 26:30 - At the Last Supper, Jesus and his Apostles sang a hymn. That singing of a hymn helped Jesus and his Apostles prepare to fulfill the work that was before them.

Just before the Prophet Joseph Smith was martyred in Carthage Jail, he asked John Taylor to sing *“A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief”* (Hymns, no. 29; see also B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 2:282-84).

Latter-day hymns inspired by Old Testament psalms

The LDS hymnbook could be viewed as our latter-day equivalent of the psalms. Latter-day hymns that were inspired by Old Testament psalms include: *“The Lord Is My Shepherd”* (Hymns, no. 108; **Psalm 23**), *“The Lord Is My Light”* (Hymns, no. 89; **Psalm 27:1**), *“How Great Thou Art”* (Hymns, no. 86; **Psalm 8:3-9; Psalm 9:1-2**), and *“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”* (Hymns, no. 72; **Psalm 23:6; Psalm 150**).

Conclusion

The psalms bear powerful witness of the divine mission of Jesus Christ. They also remind us of the great blessings that he and our Heavenly Father have given us. And they suggest ways we can express gratitude for those blessings. The final Psalm, **Psalm 150**, summarizes the message of the book.

"King Solomon: Man of Wisdom, Man of Foolishness"

Lesson 26 – 1 Kings 3; 5-11

Introduction

This lesson is about King Solomon, a man who received great gifts from God but eventually used those gifts unrighteously. As we review the lesson material, look for incidents that show the gradual decline of Solomon. Look for his flaws not to judge him, but to learn from his mistakes.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks: *"We generally think of Satan attacking us at our weakest spot. ... But weakness is not our only vulnerability. Satan can also attack us where we think we are strong—in the very areas where we are proud of our strengths. He will approach us through the greatest talents and spiritual gifts we possess. If we are not wary, Satan can cause our spiritual downfall by corrupting us through our strengths as well as by exploiting our weaknesses"* (Ensign, Oct. 1994, 12).

Background: Just before David died, Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anointed Solomon as the new king. Solomon, who was a son of David and Bathsheba, received the following counsel from his father: *"Be thou strong ... , and shew thyself a man; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, ... that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest"* (1 Kings 2:2-3).

The Lord blessed Solomon with wisdom, riches, and honor (1 Kings 3:5-28)

When Solomon succeeded his father, David, as king, he followed the Lord.

1 Kings 3:5, 9 - Soon after Solomon became king, the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, *"Ask what I shall give thee"*. Solomon asked for an *"understanding heart"*

1 Kings 3:28; 4:29 - Having an *"understanding heart"* meant that the wisdom of God was in him.

1 Kings 3:7-8 - Solomon felt a special need for that blessing because he was young and needed help. Think about how *"the wisdom of God"* would help you with your responsibilities at home, work, or Church.

1 Kings 3:11-12 - The Lord was pleased by Solomon's request for an understanding heart because Solomon had asked for a gift that would help him serve others rather than a gift with selfish purposes.

D&C 46:13-26 - Some of the spiritual gifts we may seek are enumerated in these verses. As you consider them, you might think about how you could use them in service to others.

1 Kings 3:14 - The Lord gives spiritual gifts on conditions of righteousness and obedience.

1 Kings 3:13-14 - Additional blessings the Lord granted Solomon were riches, wisdom, and honor.

1 Kings 3:16-22 - The first situation requiring King Solomon's judgment was a dispute over an infant.

1 Kings 3:23-28 - Solomon wisely determined which woman was the actual mother. Solomon's solution dramatically demonstrated that the Lord had blessed him with wisdom.

King Solomon directed construction of a great temple and had a palace built for himself.

As commanded by the Lord, Solomon directed that a temple be constructed.

1 Kings 5:1-6, 17-18; 6:15-36 - These verses emphasize the elaborate nature of the temple. Solomon used fine materials to build the temple because it was the house of the Lord.

1 Kings 6:7 - The builders showed reverence for the temple during its construction by not making noise with tools of iron while the temple was being built.

1 Kings 5:1-12 - Solomon used his wisdom, riches, and honor to ensure proper construction of the temple. Because of those blessings, he was able to obtain building materials and enlist the help of skillful laborers in the construction of the temple.

1 Kings 6:11-13 - The Lord promised Solomon that, if Solomon would remain righteous and follow the Lord, then He would dwell in the temple.

D&C 97:15-17 - A similar promise has been given by the Lord in our day regarding our temples.

1 Kings 6:2-3; 7:2, 6-7 - Solomon also had a house built for himself. His house was larger than the house of the Lord. This use of riches showed Solomon's gradual decline was starting.

Solomon dedicated the temple

1 Kings 8:22-53 - After seven years of construction, the temple was dedicated. Some of the things Solomon prayed for in the dedicatory prayer included answers to prayers (**1 Kings 8:28-30, 49-52**), forgiveness (**1 Kings 8:33-39**), rain (**1 Kings 8:35-36**), help during famine and sickness (**1 Kings 8:37**), and help in battle (**1 Kings 8:44-45**). In that dedicatory prayer, Solomon prayed for the Lord to help his people through many difficult problems.

We recognize that temple attendance can help us when we are weighed down with problems and need inspiration, guidance, answers or comfort. President Ezra Taft Benson said: *“In the peace of these lovely temples, sometimes we find solutions to the serious problems of life. Under the influence of the Spirit, sometimes pure knowledge flows to us there. Temples are places of personal revelation. When I have been weighed down by a problem or a difficulty, I have gone to the House of the Lord with a prayer in my heart for answers. These answers have come in clear and unmistakable ways”* (Ensign, Aug. 1985, 8).

1 Kings 8:41-43 - Solomon prayed that the temple would help lead unbelievers to the Lord.

A temple might accomplish that as people see it, are curious, and seek to learn about it.

1 Kings 8:61 - After Solomon offered the dedicatory prayer, he counseled his people, *“Let your heart ... be perfect with the Lord our God”*.

Actions we can take to have a heart that is “perfect with the Lord” and to keep the influence of the temple strong in our lives include: attending the temple frequently where possible, keeping a current temple recommend by living worthily, and displaying pictures of temples in our homes.

President Joseph Fielding Smith said, “When we dedicate a house to the Lord, what we really do is dedicate ourselves to the Lord’s service, with a covenant that we shall use the house in the way He intends that it shall be used” (Church News, 22 Jan. 1972, 3).

1 Kings 8:66 - The attitude of the people as they returned to their homes after the temple dedication and the 14 days of worship was one of gladness of heart.

1 Kings 9:3-9; 6:11-13 - The Lord’s message when he visited Solomon after the dedication of the temple was similar to his message during the construction of the temple. If Israel did not follow the Lord and obey his commandments, or, if they ever accepted idol worship, then they would be forsaken. Solomon obviously needed to be reminded of his covenants.

Solomon became excessively wealthy and married many non-Israelite women who persuaded him to worship idols.

1 Kings 10:1-15, 24-25 - Solomon’s riches and honor increased after the temple was built.

1 Kings 10:16-23, 26-29 - Solomon misused these blessings to build up his own kingdom rather than God’s kingdom.

Jacob 2:18-19 tells us how wisdom, riches, and honor should be used—to do good.

1 Kings 11:1-2 - Solomon’s choice of wives showed that he had turned away from God because he married out of the covenant.

1 Kings 11:3-8 - Solomon’s non-Israelite wives influenced him to construct heathen idols and worship them, turning away from the Lord. (Note that in the Joseph Smith Translation, verse 4 says that Solomon’s heart *“became as the heart of David his father”* and verse 6 says that *“Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, as David his father.”*)

Sadly, the blessings of wisdom, riches, and honor contributed to Solomon’s downfall through his misuse of them. Elder Dallin H. Oaks said: *“How ... do we prevent our strengths from becoming our downfall? The quality we must cultivate is humility. Humility is the great protector. Humility is the antidote against pride. Humility is the catalyst for all learning, especially spiritual things. Through the prophet Moroni, the Lord gave us this great insight into the role of humility: ‘I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them’* (Ether 12:27).

“We might also say that if men and women humble themselves before God, he will help them prevent their strengths from becoming weaknesses that the adversary can exploit to destroy them. ... If we are humble and teachable, hearkening to the commandments of God, the counsel of his leaders, and the promptings of his Spirit, we can be guided in how to use our spiritual gifts, our accomplishments, and all of our other strengths for righteousness. And we can be guided in how to avoid Satan’s efforts to use our strengths to cause our downfall. “In all of this, we should remember and rely on the Lord’s direction and promise: ‘Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers’ (D&C 112:10)” (Ensign, Oct. 1994, 19).

Conclusion

We should be very grateful for the spiritual and material blessings the Lord has given us and for the temple. Each of us should humble ourselves before the Lord so that we can use our blessings wisely and enter the temple worthily.

“After the Fire a Still Small Voice”

Lesson 28 – 1 Kings 17-19

Introduction

The following story was shared by Elder Thomas S. Monson: “Born in poverty but nurtured in faith, [José García] prepared for a mission call. I was present the day his recommendation was received. There appeared the statement: ‘Brother García will serve at great sacrifice to his family, for he is the means of much of the family support. He has but one possession—a treasured stamp collection—which he is willing to sell, if necessary, to help finance his mission.’ President [Spencer W.] Kimball listened attentively as this statement was read to him, and then he responded: ‘Have him sell his stamp collection. Such sacrifice will be to him a blessing.’ Then, with a twinkle in his eye and a smile on his face, this loving prophet said, ‘Each month at Church headquarters we receive thousands of letters from all parts of the world. See that we save these stamps and provide them to José at the conclusion of his mission. He will have, without cost, the finest stamp collection of any young man in Mexico.’” (Ensign, Nov. 1978, 56).

When we put the things of God first in our lives, the rewards we receive are far greater than anything we may have to sacrifice along the way. This lesson tells about two people—Elijah and the widow of Zarephath—who received great blessings because they were willing to follow God even when it was difficult to do so.

Background: After Jeroboam led the kingdom of Israel into idolatry, he and his descendants were destroyed. They were followed by another succession of idolatrous kings. Of those rulers, Ahab was the king who “did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him” (1 Kings 16:33). He married Jezebel, adopted her practice of Baal worship, and encouraged his people to join him in the worship of this false god. The prophet Elijah delivered words of warning to Ahab and his kingdom.

Elijah sealed the heavens, was miraculously sustained, and raised a widow’s son from the dead.

Because of the wickedness of Ahab and his people, Elijah declared, “There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word” (1 Kings 17:1). Elijah was able to make such a declaration because he had the sealing power. After Elijah declared that no rain would fall, the Lord commanded him to flee.

1 Kings 17:2-5 - Elijah responded to the Lord’s command as Elder Gordon B. Hinckley explained: “I draw strength from a simple statement made concerning the Prophet Elijah, who warned King Ahab of drought and famine to come upon the land. But Ahab scoffed. And the Lord told Elijah to go and hide himself by the brook Cherith, that there he should drink of the brook, and that he would be fed by the ravens. And the scripture records a simple and wonderful statement: ‘**So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord.**’ (1 Kings 17:5). There was no arguing. There was no excusing. There was no equivocating. Elijah simply ‘went and did according unto the word of the Lord.’ And he was saved from the terrible calamities that befell those who scoffed and argued and questioned” (Ensign, Dec. 1971, 123-24).

1 Kings 17:4, 6 - Elijah survived in the wilderness by being fed by ravens who responded to the Lord’s commands. If we do his will, the Lord will sustain us physically and spiritually.

1 Kings 17:7-13 - The Lord prepared a widow to help Elijah after the brook in the wilderness dried up. In this life, the Lord often helps those in need through the service of other people.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said: “I know we can each do something, however small that act may seem to be. We can pay an honest tithing and give our fast and freewill offerings. ... And we can watch for other ways to help. To worthy causes and needy people, we can give time if we don’t have money, and we can give love when our time runs out. We can share the loaves we have and trust God that the cruse of oil will not fail” (Ensign, May 1996, 31).

1 Kings 17:10-11 - The widow responded without hesitation to Elijah’s request for some water to drink.

1 Kings 17:11-14 - When the widow answered Elijah’s request for food, she explained that she and her son were down to their last meager meal.

1 Kings 17:13-15 - Elijah promised her that she should do as asked and not fear. She did as instructed. Elder Holland said that the widow’s response when Elijah asked her for food was an “expression of faith—as great, under these circumstances, as any I know in the scriptures. ... Perhaps uncertain what the cost of her faith would be ... , she first took her small loaf to Elijah, obviously trusting that if there were not enough bread left over, at least she and her son would have died in an act of pure charity” (Ensign, May 1996, 29).

God commanded the widow to feed Elijah when she had so little because it gave her an opportunity to be rewarded for her faith and charitable heart.

1 Kings 17:16 - The widow received an abundance of meal for her obedience in a difficult situation. We are blessed when we put God first and do what he asks, as President Ezra Taft Benson taught: “When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives. Our love of the Lord will govern the claims for our affection, the demands on our time, the interests we pursue, and the order of our

priorities. ... May God bless us to put [him] first and, as a result, reap peace in this life and eternal life with a fulness of joy in the life to come” (Ensign, May 1988, 4, 6).

1 Kings 17:17-22 - Elijah prayed for the boy’s life when the widow’s son became sick and died. His prayer was answered and a priesthood miracle occurred.

Elijah challenged the priests of Baal and opened the heavens for rain.

In the third year of the famine, the Lord commanded Elijah, “Go [show] thyself to Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth” (1 Kings 18:1).

1 Kings 18:17 - Ahab reacted with scorn when he saw Elijah because he blamed Elijah for the famine.

1 Kings 18:18 - The real cause of the famine was Ahab’s rejection of the true God and his idol worship.

1 Kings 18:19-20 - As Elijah had requested, Ahab gathered all of Israel and 850 false priests at Mount Carmel. When the people gathered to hear Elijah speak, he asked them, “How long halt ye between two opinions?” (1 Kings 18:21). Elder Neal A. Maxwell said: “The stirring words of various prophets ... urge us to choose, to decide, and not to halt. ... Elijah’s message has tremendous relevancy today, for all must finally choose between the gods of this world and the God of eternity”(That My Family Should Partake [1974], 22).

1 Kings 18:36-37 - Elijah’s purpose in challenging the priests of Baal was to give the people a chance to turn back to God after witnessing his power.

1 Kings 18:38-39 - The people reacted with fear to the Lord’s display of power and acknowledged Him.

1 Kings 18:45 – The people were blessed with rain for acknowledging the Lord and his power.

Elijah was comforted by the Holy Ghost and instructed to continue in God’s work.

Angry about Elijah’s victory over the priests of Baal, Jezebel sought to kill him. Elijah fled into the wilderness and cried to the Lord, saying, “It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life” (1 Kings 19:4). The Lord blessed Elijah by sending an angel with food and water. We need to note that even prophets can experience despair and need the comfort and guidance that only God can provide.

1 Kings 19:10, 14 - Despite the people’s response to God’s spectacular display of power, Elijah felt that he was the only Israelite left who worshiped the true God.

1 Kings 19:4, 8. Elijah prayed and fasted to gain peace. If we feel discouraged, depressed, or despairing, we too can find comfort in prayer and fasting.

1 Kings 19:9-13 - God comforted Elijah on Mount Horeb by communicating through the “still small voice” of the Holy Ghost rather than through loud and spectacular displays of power.

When a news reporter asked President Hinckley how he communicates with God, the prophet responded, “I think the best way I could describe the process is to liken it to the experience of Elijah as set forth in the book of First Kings. Elijah spoke to the Lord, and there was a wind, a great wind, and the Lord was not in the wind. And there was an earthquake, and the Lord was not in the earthquake. And there was a fire, and the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire a still, small voice, which I describe as the whisperings of the Spirit” (Ensign, Nov. 1996, 51).

President Ezra Taft Benson taught: “Do you take time to listen to the promptings of the Spirit? Answers to prayer come most often by a still voice and are discerned by our deepest, innermost feelings. I tell you that you can know the will of God concerning yourselves if you will take the time to pray and to listen” (Ensign, Nov. 1977, 32).

Besides being the Comforter, the Holy Ghost is also a teacher.

1 Kings 19:15-16 - The Lord—through the Holy Ghost—instructed Elijah to go and use his priesthood powers in the Lord’s service. Serving the Lord can help us when we are discouraged.

1 Kings 19:18 - One way the Lord comforted Elijah was by telling him that there were still many Israelites who had not adopted the worship of Baal.

The Spirit of Elijah

Joseph Smith said: “The spirit, power, and calling of Elijah is, that ye have power to hold the key of the revelations, ordinances, oracles, powers and endowments of the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood and of the kingdom of God on the earth; and to receive, obtain, and perform all the ordinances belonging to the kingdom of God, even unto the turning of the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the hearts of the children unto the fathers, even those who are in heaven. ... I wish you to understand this subject, for it is important; and if you receive it, this is the spirit of Elijah, that we redeem our dead, and connect ourselves with our fathers which are in heaven, and seal up our dead to come forth in the first resurrection; and here we want the power of Elijah to seal those who dwell on earth to those who dwell in heaven. This is the power of Elijah and the keys of the kingdom of Jehovah” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 337-38).

Conclusion

We will be comforted and guided as we put God first and heed the whisperings of the Holy Ghost.

“He Took Up ... the Mantle of Elijah”

Lesson 29 - 2 Kings 2; 5-6

Introduction

The prophet Elijah wore a mantle. We do not know exactly what the mantle looked like, but it apparently was a cloak made of cloth. The passing of the mantle from Elijah to Elisha symbolized the passing of prophetic authority to Elisha. In modern times we sometimes speak of the “mantle” of authority that the prophet receives when he is ordained and set apart. Although the prophet today does not carry a cloak or piece of cloth, God bestows the keys of the priesthood on him. These keys give him the power to act in God’s name as the leader of the Church on the earth. When a prophet dies, this mantle of authority is given to the new prophet.

Elisha succeeded Elijah as the prophet.

2 Kings 2:2-10 - Elijah was Elisha’s “master”—his priesthood leader.

2 Kings 2:11-13 - After Elijah was taken up into heaven, Elisha took up his mantle.

Today, the current President of the Church has the mantle of the prophet. In speaking of how this mantle transferred when the prophet dies, President Joseph Fielding Smith explained: *“There is no mystery about the choosing of the successor to the President of the Church. The Lord settled this a long time ago, and the senior apostle automatically becomes the presiding officer of the Church, and he is so sustained by the Council of the Twelve which becomes the presiding body of the Church when there is no First Presidency. The president is not elected, but he has to be sustained both by his brethren of the Council and by the members of the Church”* (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954-56], 3:156).

President Gordon B. Hinckley explained how this procedure was followed when he was ordained and set apart as the prophet and President of the Church following the death of President Howard W. Hunter: *“With President Hunter’s passing, the First Presidency was dissolved. Brother Monson and I, who had served as his counselors, took our places in the Quorum of the Twelve, which became the presiding authority of the Church. [A few days later] all of the living ordained Apostles gathered in a spirit of fasting and prayer in the upper room of the temple. Here we sang a sacred hymn and prayed together. We partook of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, renewing in that sacred, symbolic testament our covenants and our relationship with Him who is our divine Redeemer. The Presidency was then reorganized, following a precedent well established through generations of the past [this precedent is explained in the preceding statement by President Joseph Fielding Smith]. There was no campaigning, no contest, no ambition for office. It was quiet, peaceful, simple, and sacred. It was done after the pattern which the Lord Himself had put in place”* (*Ensign*, May 1995, 69).

As he did anciently, the Savior has given the keys of the priesthood to each of the latter-day Apostles. However, only the President of the Church, who is the senior living Apostle, may use these keys (or authorize others to use them) on behalf of the entire Church (see D&C 132:7).

2 Kings 2:14-15 - When they saw Elisha duplicate Elijah’s miracle of parting the waters of Jordan, the people responded by bowing to Elisha and recognizing his authority.

D&C 43:2-3, 7 - We immediately accept and sustain a newly ordained President of the Church because we know that God has chosen him to be his prophet.

Soon after Elijah had been taken into heaven, the people wanted to send 50 strong men to look for him.

2 Kings 2:16 - Elisha told the people not to search for Elijah (or his body).

2 Kings 2:17 - The people pleaded with Elisha until he permitted the men to go search for Elijah.

2 Kings 2:18 – When the 50 men came back without finding Elijah, Elisha reminded them that he had told them not to go. We learn from the experience of those 50 men that we should follow the counsel of the prophet the first time we hear it and not argue with or ignore the prophet’s counsel. If we sometimes wait for prophets to repeat counsel before we follow it, we are in error and need to repent quickly.

Elisha healed Naaman of leprosy.

2 Kings 5:1 – Naaman was the captain of the Syria army, but he was afflicted with leprosy.

2 Kings 5:2-9 - He went to Elisha in hope of being healed by the prophet.

2 Kings 5:10 - Elisha’s messenger told Naaman to wash in the Jordan seven times to be healed.

2 Kings 5:11-13 - At first, Naaman refused to follow Elisha’s instructions, but Naaman’s servants convinced him to do what Elisha had told him to do—even if it was a simple thing.

2 Kings 5:14 - Naaman dipped himself seven times in the Jordan River *“and he was clean”*.

The story of Naaman teaches us a valuable principle about following the counsel of the prophet—do it—even when we may not like or understand it or when it may be about small and simple matters. Some of the small, simple things we have been asked to do by the prophet or other Church leaders include introducing the gospel to our neighbors, avoiding “R” rated movies, and doing our home/visiting teaching. We can increase our willingness to follow the counsel of Church leaders if we thank our Heavenly Father for them daily in our prayers and acknowledge the leaders as the Lord’s chosen spokespersons.

Elder Rex D. Pinegar asked, *“Are we not sometimes like Naaman, looking for big or important things to do and bypassing simple things which could change our lives and heal us of our afflictions?”* (Ensign, Nov. 1994, 80).

After recounting the story of Naaman, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley said: *“The way of the gospel is a simple way. Some of the requirements may appear to you as elementary and unnecessary. Do not spurn them. Humble yourselves and walk in obedience. I promise that the results that follow will be marvelous to behold and satisfying to experience”* (Ensign, Nov. 1976, 96).

2 Kings 5:15 - Learning from his healing, Naaman declared that the God of Israel is the only God.

2 Kings 5:15 - Naaman tried to give Elisha a reward after being healed, but Elisha refused Naaman’s offer because it is important to serve without concern for earthly rewards.

Elisha guided Israel in a war with Syria.

2 Kings 6:8-10 - Elisha helped the king of Israel in the war against Syria.

2 Kings 6:11-14 - When the king of Syria learned what Elisha was doing in using his prophetic powers to aid the king of Israel, he tried to capture him in Dothan.

2 Kings 6:15 - Elisha’s servant responded with concern when he saw the Syrian horses and chariots surrounding the city.

2 Kings 6:16 - Elisha simply told his servant, *“They that be with us are more than they that be with them”*, teaching the eternal principle that God is more powerful than any earthly army.

Modern-day circumstances might lead some of us to believe that we are helpless against the evils of the world because we are such a minority in the battle against evil, but we should have confidence that *“they that be with us are more than they that be with them”* as we battle against the evils of our day.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks said: *“When I read this wonderful story as a boy, I always identified with the young servant of Elisha. I thought, If I am ever surrounded by the forces of evil while I am in the Lord’s service, I hope the Lord will open my eyes and give me faith to understand that when we are in the work of the Lord, those who are with us are always more powerful than those who oppose us”* (Ensign, Nov. 1992, 39).

D&C 84:87-88 - The confidence that *“they that be with us are more than they that be with them”* helps us as we take the gospel to all people.

President Gordon B. Hinckley said: *“We have not as yet carried the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. But we have made great strides. We have gone wherever we are permitted to go. God is at the helm, and doors will be opened by His power according to His divine will. Of that I am confident. Of that I am certain”* (Ensign, Nov. 1995, 70-71).

2 Kings 6:17 - Elisha prayed in his servant’s behalf that he be allowed to see the Lord’s army. At first, the servant didn’t see the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire that God had sent because his spiritual eyes weren’t open. Think about what we can do to open our eyes more fully to the power of God in our own lives and in the world.

Elisha’s miracles

Elisha performed many great miracles, showing compassion for the people and giving further evidence that he was Elijah’s authorized successor. He parted the waters of Jordan, healed the waters of Jericho, multiplied a widow’s oil, raised a boy from the dead, healed people who had been poisoned, fed the hungry, healed Naaman’s leprosy, caused an ax to float, and guided kings in war.

Conclusion

The President of the Church is a prophet of God. We should sustain new Church leaders and follow the counsel of the prophets. We have ample testimony in the scriptures and from our modern prophets that the power of God is greater than any other power.

“Come to the House of the Lord”

Lesson 30 – 2 Chronicles 29-30, 32, 34

Introduction

To help defend Jerusalem against attacks by the Assyrians, King Hezekiah diverted the water of the spring of Gihon to the pool of Siloam, inside the city walls. This was done by digging a conduit (tunnel) for the water through about 1770 feet of limestone rock. Hezekiah then ordered that the fountains outside the city be covered to deny the Assyrians easy access to the water. Without this water inside the walls of the city, the people of Jerusalem would not have survived the siege by the Assyrians. Just as the water from the spring of Gihon was vital for the physical survival of Hezekiah’s people during their battles with the Assyrians, living water is essential for our spiritual survival during our battles with Satan. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained that living water is *“the words of eternal life, the message of salvation, the truths about God and his kingdom; it is the doctrines of the gospel”* (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 3 vols. [1966-73], 1:151). One way to receive living water is to go to the temple, the house of the Lord, where we may be endowed with power and understanding, be instructed by the Lord, and feel peace and joy. Worship in the temple was an important protection for Israel in Hezekiah’s time, and it can also be an important protection for us.

Hezekiah ordered the house of the Lord to be cleansed.

Hezekiah’s father, Ahaz, was a wicked king who had desecrated the temple of the Lord and *“shut up [its] doors”* (2 Chronicles 28:24). When Hezekiah became king of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, in 715 B.C., one of the first things he did was open the doors of the temple and order the priests and Levites to cleanse and sanctify it (2 Chronicles 29:3-5). According to Hezekiah, the temple needed to be sanctified because the people had been *“turn[ing] away [our] faces from the habitation of the Lord”*.

2 Chronicles 29:8-10 - Because of their disregard for the temple, the Lord had forsaken them. By cleansing the temple and preparing it for worship again, Hezekiah hoped the Lord would turn away his wrath.

2 Chronicles 29:20-21, 29-31, 36 - Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem consecrated themselves, offered sacrifices, and worshipped when the temple had been cleansed.

By the time of Hezekiah’s reign, much of the kingdom of Israel [the Northern Kingdom] had been taken captive by the Assyrians. Hezekiah promised the remaining Israelites that if they would *“turn again unto the Lord,”* the captives would be released. Instead, most of the people of Israel rejected Hezekiah’s invitation. Because of the wickedness of the people, the remainder of the kingdom of Israel was taken captive several years later (see 2 Kings 18:10-12). The captive Israelites became the lost ten tribes.

The Assyrians invaded. Isaiah and Hezekiah prayed for help, and the Lord answered.

2 Chronicles 32:1 - After Israel was taken into captivity, the Assyrians began to attack Judah.

2 Chronicles 32:6-8 - Hezekiah told his people that the Lord was with them so they should be strong.

2 Chronicles 32:9-17 - Sennacherib sent his servants to speak to and scare the people in Jerusalem by telling them that their God could not save them any more than other nations’ gods had saved them.

Of course, today Satan tries to convince us that God cannot or will not help us.

2 Chronicles 32:20 - Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah prayed to heaven for protection.

Their prayers were answered as the Lord slew the leaders of the Assyrian army. The Lord’s protection was received because of their righteousness, which was demonstrated by their worship at the temple.

President Howard W. Hunter encouraged: *“Let us be a temple-attending people. Attend the temple as frequently as personal circumstances allow. Keep a picture of a temple in your home that your children may see it. Teach them about the purposes of the house of the Lord. Have them plan from their earliest years to go there and to remain worthy of that blessing. If proximity to a temple does not allow frequent attendance, gather in the history of your family and prepare the names for the sacred ordinances performed only in the temple. This family research is essential to the work of the temples, and blessings surely will come to those who do that work”* (Ensign, Nov. 1994, 8).

Josiah and his people covenanted to serve the Lord.

Hezekiah was succeeded as king by his son Manasseh and his grandson Amon. Manasseh ruled Judah in wickedness, placing idols in the temple and leading the people to sin. Manasseh eventually humbled himself, however, and repented before his death. Manasseh’s son Amon also worshiped the idols his father had made. Amon did not repent, and was slain by his own servants. His son Josiah became king of Judah when eight years old. He became a righteous king who rejected the wicked ways of his father and grandfather.

2 Chronicles 34:1-2 - King Josiah *“did which was right in the sight of the Lord.”* Josiah sought the true God, destroyed idolatry in the kingdom, and sent people to repair the temple. He was only 15 or 16 years old when he began making these important changes.

2 Chronicles 34:14 - During the renovation of the temple, Hilkiah the high priest found a book of the law of the Lord. By this time in Judah's history the written law apparently had been lost and was virtually unknown.

2 Chronicles 34:19, 21 - When the book of the law was read to him, Josiah was caused to mourn because the wrath of the Lord would be poured out on he and his people.

2 Chronicles 34:22-25 - The prophetess Huldah said the judgment of God would come upon Judah because the people had failed to keep the word of the Lord and do what the scriptures taught.

President Ezra Taft Benson described the dangers of neglecting one of our books of scripture, the Book of Mormon: *"In 1829, the Lord warned the Saints that they are not to trifle with sacred things (see D&C 6:12). Surely the Book of Mormon is a sacred thing, and yet many trifle with it, or in other words, take it lightly, treat it as though it is of little importance. In 1832, as some early missionaries returned from their fields of labor, the Lord reproved them for treating the Book of Mormon lightly. As a result of that attitude, he said, their minds had been darkened. Not only had treating this sacred book lightly brought a loss of light to themselves, it had also brought the whole Church under condemnation, even all the children of Zion. And then the Lord said, 'And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon' (D&C 84:54-57). ... If the early Saints were rebuked for treating [it] lightly, are we under any less condemnation if we do the same?"* (Ensign, Nov. 1986, 4-5).

2 Chronicles 34:26, 28 - Huldah said Josiah would die in peace because of his righteousness.

2 Chronicles 34:29-30 - After Josiah found that his people would be condemned because they had not done as the scriptures instructed, he called all the people to the temple and read the scriptures to them.

He did this knowing that the people could not follow God's laws if they did not know them.

President Spencer W. Kimball said: *"The Lord is not trifling with us when he gives us these things, for 'unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.' (Luke 12:48). Access to these things means responsibility for them. We must study the scriptures according to the Lord's commandment (see 3 Nephi 23:1-5); and we must let them govern our lives"* (Ensign, Sept. 1976, 5).

2 Chronicles 34:31-33 - While Josiah and his people were at the temple, they made a covenant with the Lord to follow the Lord and keep his commandments with all their hearts and souls.

Conclusion

The people in the kingdom of Judah eventually became so wicked that the Lord allowed them to be taken captive. During their reigns, however, Hezekiah and Josiah had sought to strengthen the people by turning their attention to the temple and the scriptures. As we focus our attention on obeying the Lord's commandments and being worthy to enter the temple, we will be blessed with spiritual strength and joy. Enjoy the blessings of the temple by living worthily and attending as often as possible.

"A credit card with the Lord"

Excerpt from a talk by President Gordon B. Hinckley: *"I hold before you two credit cards. Most of you are familiar with cards such as these. The first is a bank credit card. It permits me to secure merchandise on credit and then pay for my purchases at one time. It is a valuable thing and something to be safeguarded. If stolen and dishonestly used, it could cause me great loss and perhaps considerable embarrassment. In accepting it from my bank, I enter into a contract and become bound by obligations and agreements. In accepting the card, I agree to meet the conditions under which it was issued. It is issued for one year only and must be reissued each year if I am to enjoy the privileges afforded by it. It is not really mine. The bank retains ownership. If I fail in my required performance, then the bank may shut off the credit and repossess the card. The other card which I have is what we call a temple recommend. It represents a credit card with the Lord, making available to me many of His greatest gifts. The bank card is concerned with things of the world, the recommend with things of God. To secure a temple recommend, the receiver must also have demonstrated his eligibility, and that eligibility is based on personal worthiness. Once granted, it is not in place forever but must be reissued each year. Furthermore, it is subject to forfeiture if the holder does anything which would disqualify him for its privileges. Eligibility for a temple recommend is not based on financial worth. That has nothing whatever to do with it. It is based on consistent personal behavior, on the goodness of one's life. It is not concerned with money matters, but rather with things of eternity. The bank card opens the door to financial credit. The temple recommend opens the door to the House of the Lord. It is concerned with entry into holy precincts to do sacred and divine work. ... This recommend which I have and which so many of you have is a precious and wonderful thing. It makes one eligible for an exclusive and remarkable privilege—the privilege of entering that House which says on its wall, 'Holiness to the Lord—the House of the Lord.' Live worthy to serve in that house. Keep it holy. Do your part to keep from the Lord's house any unclean or defiling influence or person. Enjoy its beauty. Enjoy the wonder of the things that are spoken there, the beauty and the blessing of the ordinances there administered. To [those] who have not yet been to the temple, may I suggest that you take advantage of the opportunity of being baptized in behalf of the dead. And then let that sacred experience become an anchor to your lives, that you so conduct yourselves at all times and in all circumstances that, at the proper time, you may secure a special and restricted credit card with the Lord, even a recommend to His holy house, there to enjoy all of its blessings and privileges"* (Ensign, May 1990, 49, 52).

“Happy Is the Man That Findeth Wisdom”

Lesson 31 – Proverbs and Ecclesiastes

Introduction

If you can complete the following phrases, you are already familiar with some of the wisdom of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes: _____ goeth before destruction (16:18); Train up a _____ in the way he should go (22:6); To every thing there is a _____, and a _____ to every purpose under the heaven (E 3:1); _____ in the Lord with all thine heart (3:5); A _____ turneth away wrath (15:1); for as he _____ in his heart, so is he (23:7).

Proverbs are short sayings that generally give counsel about living righteously. The Old Testament records that Solomon “spake three thousand proverbs” (1 Kings 4:32). Some of these wise sayings are included in the book of *Proverbs*. Although Solomon and the other authors of this book were not prophets, the Lord inspired much of what they wrote. Their writings generally reflect a belief that true wisdom comes from God.

The book of *Ecclesiastes* also contains wise sayings, and some people believe Solomon to be its author. The message of *Ecclesiastes* is that life is meaningful only through God.

Wisdom

The books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes emphasize the importance of wisdom.

Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 9:9-10 – There is a difference between being learned and being wise. In biblical language, to “*fear the Lord*” means to reverence and obey him. Wisdom is more than knowledge; it is the proper application of knowledge. To the Israelites, wisdom meant obedience to God’s laws.

Proverbs 2:2-6 teaches the need for diligence in obtaining the knowledge of God.

Proverbs 3:13-18; Ecclesiastes 7:12 - The value of wisdom surpasses the value of earthly treasures. Wisdom brings happiness and peace.

Proverbs 3:18 - wisdom “*is a tree of life*” to those who possess it. It leads to righteousness.

Proverbs 9:9-10 and **Proverbs 15:31-33** - Qualities of wise people include reverence for that which is holy and the ability to accept instruction and apply it for their benefit.

Trust in the Lord

Proverbs 3:5-7 - Counsel is given to trust in the Lord and follow his direction.

Proverbs 3:6 - To acknowledge God means to worship Him and seek His counsel and guidance. Then, when guidance or inspiration is received, the wise follow it.

The words we speak

Proverbs 6:16-19 lists seven things the Lord hates. Three of these things—lying, bearing false witness, and sowing discord—apply to the words we speak.

Proverbs 16:27-28; Proverbs 18:8; Proverbs 25:18 - The Lord is so concerned with the words we speak because they reflect our thoughts...and our thoughts become actions which, when continued, become habits. The problems of lying, gossiping, or speaking negatively about others are to be avoided.

Proverbs 16:24; Proverbs 12:25 – 16:24 says “*pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul.*” Pleasant words make us happy—both the speaker and the listener.

Proverbs 15:1 - Benefits come from speaking softly when a disagreement arises, as Elder Gordon B. Hinckley explained: “*We seldom get into trouble when we speak softly. It is only when we raise our voices that the sparks fly and tiny molehills become great mountains of contention*” (*Ensign*, June 1971, 72).

Pride

Proverbs 8:13 states that the Lord hates pride. He considers it a serious sin.

President Ezra Taft Benson said: “*The central feature of pride is enmity—enmity toward God and enmity toward our fellowmen. Enmity means ‘hatred toward, hostility to, or a state of opposition.’ It is the power by which Satan wishes to reign over us. Pride is essentially competitive in nature. We pit our will against God’s. When we direct our pride toward God, it is in the spirit of ‘my will and not thine be done.’ As Paul said, they ‘seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s’ (Philippians 2:21). ...Our will in competition to God’s will allows desires, appetites, and passions to go unbridled (see Alma 38:12; 3 Nephi 12:30). The proud cannot accept the authority of God giving direction to their lives (see Helaman 12:6). They pit their perceptions of truth against God’s great knowledge, their abilities versus God’s priesthood power, their accomplishments against His mighty works. Our enmity toward God takes on many labels, such as rebellion, hard-heartedness, stiff-neckedness, unrepentant, puffed up, easily offended, and sign seekers. The proud wish God would agree with them. They aren’t interested in changing their*

opinions to agree with God's. ... *Pride is a damning sin in the true sense of that word. It limits or stops progression (see Alma 12:10-11). The proud are not easily taught (see 1 Nephi 15:3, 1 Nephi 15:7-11). They won't change their minds to accept truths, because to do so implies they have been wrong*" (Ensign, May 1989, 4, 6).

Proverbs 13:10 and 16:18 teach that pride leads to contention and destruction. As President Ezra Taft Benson said: "*Another face of pride is contention. Arguments, fights, unrighteous dominion, generation gaps, divorces, spouse abuse, riots, and disturbances all fall into this category of pride. Contention in our families drives the Spirit of the Lord away. It also drives many of our family members away. ... Pride adversely affects all our relationships—our relationship with God and His servants, between husband and wife, parent and child*" (Ensign, May 1989, 6).

Proverbs 16:19 – Counsels us to overcome pride.

Friendship

Proverbs 13:20; Proverbs 22:24-25 – Here we are warned about unrighteous friends. Their companionship can lead to destruction. They can teach us their habits and ensnare us in sin.

Proverbs 17:17; Proverbs 27:9 - Characteristics of good friends include loyalty, love, and devotion.

Proverbs 18:24 - To have good friends we need to be good friends. Uplift others and they will be there for you when you need them.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 - True friends react when we make unwise choices...they help us recover.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton said: "*Someone has said, 'A friend is a person who is willing to take me the way I am.' Accepting this as one definition of the word, may I quickly suggest that we are something less than a real friend if we leave a person the same way we find him. ... No greater reward can come to any of us as we serve than a sincere 'Thank you for being my friend.' When those who need assistance find their way back through and with us, it is friendship in action. When the weak are made strong and the strong stronger through our lives, friendship is real. If a man can be judged by his friends, he can also be measured by their heights. ... Yes, a friend is a person who is willing to take me the way I am but who is willing and able to leave me better than he found me*" (Ensign, Jan. 1973, 41, 43).

We are expected to strengthen friendships among family members as well as acquaintances.

Jesus Christ has often called his followers his friends (**D&C 88:62; D&C 93:45**). He has shown that he is our friend as referenced in **John 15:13**. We show that we are his friends by following his teachings—as taught in **John 15:14**.

Raising children

Proverbs 22:6 says to "*train up a child in the way he should go.*"

D&C 68:25-28 - Parents need to follow this counsel. When we effectively teach children the principles of the gospel and nurture their testimonies, we are following divine guidance. Elder Richard G. Scott said: "*You must be willing to forgo personal pleasure and self-interest for family-centered activity, and not turn over to church, school, or society the principal role of fostering a child's well-rounded development. It takes time, great effort, and significant personal sacrifice to 'train up a child in the way he should go.'* But where can you find greater rewards for a job well done?" (Ensign, May 1993, 34).

Proverbs 19:18; Proverbs 29:17 - Children need rules, boundaries, and loving correction. Properly disciplined and corrected, a child will later appreciate your loving actions.

Proverbs 6:20-23 - Children should respond to the righteous counsel of their parents with enthusiasm and diligence. Parents should give correction as directed in **D&C 121:41-44**.

Happiness and good humor

Proverbs 15:13; Proverbs 17:22 - It is very important to develop a happy attitude ("*a merry heart*") and a good sense of humor, as President Hugh B. Brown said: "*I would like to have you smile because after all we must keep a sense of humor whatever comes. I think of all the people in the world we should be the happiest. We have the greatest and most joyous message in the world. I think when we get on the other side; someone will meet us with a smile (unless we go to the wrong place and then someone will grin), so let us be happy. But let our happiness be genuine—let it come from within*" (The Abundant Life [1965], 83).

Conclusion

Remember and follow the wise counsel in *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes*. You may also want to memorize a favorite passage from one of those books. Post some Proverbs on your refrigerator door.

“I Know That My Redeemer Liveth”

Lesson 32 – Job 1-2, 13, 19, 27, 42

Introduction

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin once told of farmers in the hot desert of northwest Mexico who “grow varieties of corn and beans that are unusually hardy and drought resistant. These varieties survive and flourish in a harsh climate where other plants would wither and die. One of these plants is the white tepary bean. Its seed will sprout and the plant will grow even when very little rain falls. It sends its roots as deep as six feet into the rocky, sandy earth to find the moisture it needs. It can flower and fruit in the 115-degree (Fahrenheit) desert temperatures with only one yearly rainfall. Its foliage remains remarkably green, with little irrigation, even in the heat of mid-July.”

Elder Wirthlin suggested what we might learn from this analogy that can help us endure adversity:

“Perhaps members of the Church could emulate the example of these hardy, sturdy plants. We should send our roots deep into the soil of the gospel. We should grow, flourish, flower, and bear good fruit in abundance despite the evil, temptation, or criticism we might encounter. We should learn to thrive in the heat of adversity” (Ensign, May 1989, 7).

This lesson is about Job, a man whose faith and righteousness helped him endure severe adversity.

Job was sorely tested

From these scriptures, we gain insight into the character of Job:

- **Job 1:1** - He was a good man who feared God and shunned evil.
- **Job 1:3, 21** - He was wealthy but not caught up in wealth.
- **Job 2:3** - He had integrity.
- **Job 4:3-4** - He strengthened the weak.
- **Job 23:10-12** - He walked in the Lord’s paths and esteemed the Lord’s words.
- **Job 29:12-16** - He was compassionate to the widow, the poor, the lame, and the blind.
- **Job 31:29-30** - He was concerned for his enemies and forgave them.

Trials Job experienced included:

- **Job 1:13-17** - Loss of servants, property, and income.
- **Job 1:18-19** - Loss of children.
- **Job 2:7; 7:5; 16:16** - Physical illness and pain.
- **Job 7:4, 13-14** - Restless sleep filled with nightmares.
- **Job 2:9; 4:1, 7-8; 11:1-6; 19:13-22** - Cruel accusations and loss of support from friends and family.
- **Job 10:15** - Confusion about why he was asked to go through these trials.
- **Job 16:10-11; 30:1, 8-10** - Mockery by those who delighted in his downfall.
- **Job 19:6-8; 23:3-4** - The feeling that God had forgotten him or was not listening.

Job’s trials compare with the trials people experience in our day--loss of property, loss of children, loss of health, and loss of the love and companionship of friends and family.

Job 1:9-10 - Satan claimed Job’s righteousness was only motivated by the great blessings he received.

Job 1:11; 2:4-5 - Satan predicted Job would curse God when his wealth and other blessings were taken away.

Job 1:20-22; 2:10 - Job reacted with humility when his blessings were taken away. Obviously, there is a lesson we can learn from his reactions.

Job 1:22 - Despite his adversity, Job “*sinned not, nor charged God foolishly*”.

Some people do charge God foolishly when sorrow, misfortune, or tragedy strike. They may blame God or question his wisdom or providence, feeling that he does not understand or love them. Some may even question his existence.

Job’s friends

Job 4:7-8; 8:6 - Eliphaz and Bildad, two of Job’s friends, explained his suffering as a punishment from God for sins that Job had committed. It is dangerous to believe that all suffering comes as punishment.

Questions to ask during adversity

Elder Richard G. Scott said: “*When you face adversity, you can be led to ask many questions. Some serve a useful purpose; others do not. To ask, Why does this have to happen to me? Why do I have to suffer this now? What have I done to cause this? will lead you into blind alleys. It really does no good to ask questions that reflect*

opposition to the will of God. Rather ask, What am I to do? What am I to learn from this experience? What am I to change? Whom am I to help? **How can I remember my many blessings in times of trial?**" (Ensign, Nov. 1995, 17).

Job found strength in the Lord.

Job 13:13-16 - Job's trust in the Lord was a great source of spiritual strength for him.

Romans 8:28; 2 Nephi 2:2, 11, 24; D&C 58:2-4, 122:5-9 – All of these passages teach us to develop trust in the Lord that will sustain us through trials. Trials are opportunities and can work for our good. Because the Lord loves us, he has assured us that as we are faithful, all things will be for our good and help us grow.

In Job 9, Job described the trials that had befallen him, then testified of the Savior. He acknowledged the justice and greatness of God and concluded that man cannot contend against him.

Job 19:25-27 - Job's testimony of the Savior helped him endure his trials as shown in these verses.

Job found strength in his personal righteousness and integrity.

Job 27:2-6 - Job's personal integrity was another source of spiritual strength during his afflictions.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin defined *integrity* as *"always doing what is right and good, regardless of the immediate consequences. It means being righteous from the very depth of our soul, not only in our actions but, more important, in our thoughts and in our hearts. Personal integrity implies such trustworthiness and incorruptibility that we are incapable of being false to a trust or covenant"* (Ensign, May 1990, 30).

Personal integrity can help us during times of trial. As we maintain our integrity, we can gain strength from knowing that the course of our lives is pleasing to the Lord.

After Job had faithfully endured his trials, the Lord blessed him.

Job 42:10-15; James 5:11 - After Job had faithfully endured his trials; the Lord blessed him with more blessings than he had previously enjoyed.

Job 23:10; 3 Nephi 15:9 - The Lord blesses us as we faithfully endure trials.

Although the Lord blessed Job with *"twice as much as he had before,"* the spiritual blessings the Lord gives us as we faithfully endure are even greater than the temporal blessings.

Elder Orson F. Whitney said: *"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 ... and it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire and which will make us more like our Father and Mother in heaven"* (quoted in Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 98).

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: *"I am like a huge, rough stone rolling down from a high mountain; and the only polishing I get is when some corner gets rubbed off by coming in contact with something else, ... knocking off a corner here and a corner there. Thus I will become a smooth and polished shaft in the quiver of the Almighty"* (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 304).

Keeping perspective during adversity

President Spencer W. Kimball said: *"If we looked at mortality as the whole of existence, then pain, sorrow, failure, and short life would be calamity. But if we look upon life as an eternal thing stretching far into the premortal past and on into the eternal post-death future, then all happenings may be put in proper perspective. ... Are we not exposed to temptations to test our strength, sickness that we might learn patience, death that we might be immortalized and glorified? If all the sick for whom we pray were healed, if all the righteous were protected and the wicked destroyed, the whole program of the Father would be annulled and the basic principle of the gospel, free agency, would be ended. No man would have to live by faith"* (*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [1975], 97).

Conclusion

We can receive strength to endure our trials by trusting in the Lord, building our testimonies of him, and maintaining our integrity so we can know our lives are pleasing to him. Contemplate how you can apply the principles discussed in this lesson to help you endure adversity.

Sharing the Gospel with the World

Lesson 33 - Jonah 1-4; Micah 2, 4-7

Introduction

How many young men in the Church does the Lord want to serve full-time missions? **All** worthy, able young men. And it is important that each of these young men respond to this call. Who else is eligible to serve full-time missions? Worthy single sisters 21 years of age or older and senior couples when their circumstances allow. In 1979, President Spencer W. Kimball spoke of the need for more missionaries who could preach the gospel to people in all parts of the world. He declared: *“I believe the Lord can do anything he sets his mind to do. But I can see no good reason why the Lord would open doors that we are not prepared to enter”* (“The Uttermost Parts of the Earth,” *Ensign*, July 1979, 9). This lesson will discuss how the lives and writings of Jonah and Micah help us understand our responsibility to love all people and share the blessings of the gospel with them.

Jonah was called to preach to Nineveh, but he ran away.

Jonah 1:2 - The Lord wanted Jonah to go to Nineveh to preach repentance.

Nahum 3:1-5 - Jonah was reluctant to accept a mission call to Nineveh because of the great wickedness and violence of Nineveh. The people of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, were enemies to Israel.

Jonah 1:3 - Jonah went to Tarshish to try to escape from the presence of the Lord and from the calling extended to him. But as he was to learn, we cannot hide from the responsibilities of our callings.

Jonah 1:4 - 2:10 - The Lord showed mercy and helped Jonah survive and repent.

Jonah 2:1-9* (cited above) – While he was inside the great fish, Jonah learned that the Lord answers prayers when we repent and turn to him for forgiveness.

Matthew 12:39-41 - During his earthly ministry, the Savior spoke about the “*sign of the prophet Jonas [Jonah]*”. This sign meant that just as Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish and then was brought forth alive, so the Savior would spend three days and nights buried in the earth and then would come forth resurrected.

We can learn from the story of Jonah that rather than avoid our missionary responsibility, we need to be more valiant in obeying the Lord and sharing the gospel.

Through his prophets, the Lord has repeatedly commanded every worthy, able young man to serve a full-time mission. He has also encouraged senior couples to serve as full-time missionaries if they are able. Some reasons why some able young men and senior couples choose not to serve missions include lack of commitment and faith, unworthiness, unwillingness to leave the comforts of home and family, fear of what might be expected of them.

Every worthy, able young man should prepare to serve a mission

President Spencer W. Kimball: *“When I ask for more missionaries, I am not asking for more testimony-barren or unworthy missionaries. I am asking that we start earlier and train our missionaries better in every branch and every ward in the world. That is another challenge—that the young people will understand that it is a great privilege to go on a mission and that they must be physically well, mentally well, spiritually well, and that ‘the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance.’ ... The question is frequently asked: Should every young man fill a mission? And the answer has been given by the Lord. It is ‘Yes.’ Every young man should fill a mission”* (*Ensign*, Oct. 1974, 7-8).

The need for couple missionaries

Elder David B. Haight said: *“In behalf of the Brethren, this is a call for retired couples to seriously consider serving a mission. We desperately need more couples to help meet our needs. ... Less than 50 percent of the requests for couple missionaries from [our] mission presidents are being filled. ... The Brethren hope that many, many more couples will make themselves available for full-time service to the Church. The need is great! Hundreds of thousands of new members join the Church each year, and they need to hear a friendly voice of support and comfort from experienced members. The refrain, ‘I’ll go where you want me to go, dear Lord’ (Hymns, 1985, no. 270), should be more than a hymn we sing on Sunday. It should be our own prayer of faith as we serve wherever the Lord has need of us”* (*Ensign*, Feb. 1996, 7, 12).

The people of Nineveh responded to Jonah’s message and repented.

After Jonah repented, the Lord called him again to preach repentance to the people of Nineveh.

Jonah 3:5-9 - The people of Nineveh responded to Jonah's message. In ancient times, people clothed themselves in coarse cloth (sackcloth) and sat in ashes to show that they were humble and repentant.

Jonah 3:10 - God responded to the change in the people by suspending their punishment.

Jonah 3:4 - Jonah had prophesied the downfall of Nineveh in 40 days.

Jonah 4:1-3 - Jonah responded with anger when the Lord forgave the people of Nineveh.

Jonah 4:4-11 - The Lord taught Jonah by the growth of the gourd that gave shade and comfort and then died that God loves all his children. Just as he showed mercy to Jonah, he desired to show mercy to the repentant people of Nineveh.

Jonah's experience can teach us that we need to love other people in the way the Lord loves them.

Micah prophesied of the mission of latter-day Israel.

The prophet Micah called on the people of Israel to repent of their wickedness and return to the Lord. He prophesied of the destruction of Jacob (Israel) and Judah. He also prophesied that latter-day Israel (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) would accomplish the purposes of the Lord with great power.

Micah 2:12-13 - The Lord promised that he would gather the remnant of Israel, that they would become a great multitude, and that he would lead them. These promises are being fulfilled today.

Micah 4:1-7 - Some of Micah's great prophecies about the latter days are: the temple shall be built, Israel shall gather to it, the Millennial era will commence, and the Lord will reign in Zion.

Micah 4:1-2 - Micah prophesied that after the latter-day temple was established, people would flow to it and the law should go forth from it.

Micah 4:3-7 - Micah prophesied that during the Millennium, the Lord would establish peace and reign over the people from Mount Zion. These prophecies are important to us because we must be the instruments in the Lord's hand to prepare the way for these prophecies to be fulfilled.

Micah 4:11-13 - This scripture is about the latter-day destiny of Israel. In the ancient world, oxen were often used to thresh grain. They would walk over the grain, separating the chaff from the kernel. The chaff was blown away and the kernel saved. The nations that oppose Zion will be gathered as sheaves and then be threshed by Israel.

D&C 29:7; 33:5-7 - This work of separating the chaff from the kernel can be compared to latter-day Israel's responsibility to do missionary work throughout the world.

Micah 5:2-4 - Micah prophesied of the Savior's birth in Bethlehem.

Micah 5:7 - **The Lord's people and their effect on the people of the world are compared to dew or showers on the grass. By saying that these showers will not wait "for the sons of men", Micah meant that just as mortals cannot stop dew from forming or showers from falling, nothing can stop the Lord's work from progressing throughout the world.**

Micah 5:8 - Here the Lord's people are compared to a lion. Just as a flock of sheep has no power to stop a young lion, no power on earth will be able to hinder the work of the Lord.

In 1842 the Prophet Joseph Smith declared, "*No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done*" (History of the Church, 4:540).

Micah 6:6-8 - This scripture helps us when we feel overwhelmed by all that is expected of us by reminding us that the way to success is simple—...do justly, ...love mercy, and...walk humbly with God.

That doesn't mean it is easy—just simple.

Micah 7:18-20 - After prophesying of the Lord's work in the latter days, Micah came to a conclusion about God's nature—that he delights in mercy; is forgiving, compassionate, and faithful in keeping the covenants he made with our fathers.

Many phrases in these verses could be applied to the Lord's dealings with the people of Nineveh.

All of these phrases could also be applied to the Lord's dealings with us.

Conclusion

The Lord loves all his children and we, as latter-day Israel, have the great responsibility to share his love and the truths of the gospel with all people. Think about and act on what you have learned from Jonah and Micah.

“I Will Betroth Thee unto Me in Righteousness”

Lesson 34 – Hosea 1-3; 11; 13-14

Introduction

Each of the following phrases is a comparison from the book of Hosea. Think about what the comparison might mean. For example, saying someone is “*as a lion*” may indicate strength or fierceness.

“The children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea”

“I will pour out my wrath upon them like water”

“The Lord ... shall come unto us as the rain”

“He shall come as an eagle”

“Israel is an empty vine”

“They shall be ... as the smoke out of the chimney”

“I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps [cubs]”

Hosea and other prophets used comparisons because comparing a complicated or unfamiliar idea with one that is simpler or more familiar makes it more understandable to the people who are being taught. Comparisons also help provide a lot of detail in just a few words. In addition to these smaller comparisons, Hosea also used extended comparisons, which are called metaphors or similitudes (*similitude* is the word used in the scriptures). The book of Hosea contains several comparisons to help us understand the relationship between Jesus Christ and his people.

Background: Hosea preached both before and after the fall of Israel. His ministry lasted somewhere between two to as many as eight decades. Hosea received his call under Jeroboam II, king of Israel, when Israel was deep in apostasy. His marriages, as directed by the Lord, put him in a position that helped him understand how the Lord might have felt in his relationship with Israel as the people prostituted themselves and then came running back in their moments of remorse and repentance.

Using the similitude of a faithful husband and an adulterous wife, Hosea describes the relationship between the Lord and Israel.

One of the most frequently used similitudes in the scriptures describes the Lord as a bridegroom (or husband) and his covenant people as his bride (or wife). Hosea 1-3 powerfully uses this similitude, comparing Israel’s idol worship to adultery. In these chapters the prophet Hosea represents the Lord as the husband, and Gomer represents Israel as the wife.

In the book of Hosea, the Lord’s relationship with Israel (and with the Church today) is compared to the relationship between a husband and wife. As we review the selected scriptural passages, consider what this comparison teaches us about the level of commitment and devotion the Lord expects from us.

Hosea 1:2-3; 2:5, 13 - Ancient Israel was comparable to Gomer, who is described as “*a wife of whoredoms*”, because just as Gomer had left her husband for her lovers, Israel had forgotten the Lord and become wicked.

Israel’s “lovers”—the things that caused the people to turn away from the Lord were other gods, material goods, and the practices of the world. Each of these things diverted Israel and may divert us from our dedication to following the Savior unless we guard against them daily.

Hosea 2:5 - The adulterous wife gave credit for her food and clothing to her partners in adultery.

Hosea 2:5; 2:12 - The Israelites attributed the fruitful land in which they lived to their false gods or idols.

People today give credit to false gods (degrees, financial expertise, worldly knowledge, useful contacts) for the blessings they receive.

Hosea 2:8-9 - The husband reminded his wife that he—not her lovers—supplied her with food, water, and other possessions and warned that just as he supplied them, he could take them away.

The Lord has provided you with material and spiritual blessings as gifts.

It is required of us to show our appreciation to the Lord for the blessings he has given us.

Hosea 2:6-13 – records the attitude of the husband toward his unfaithful wife. Here, he is willing to let justice prevail and let her learn by punishment, deprivation, and severe judgments the need to repent.

The attitude is different in verses **14-23**. Even though the wife had been unfaithful, the husband still loved her and wanted her to come back to him. Likewise, the Lord still loves his people who have gone astray, and he wants them to turn again to him.

Elder Henry B. Eyring explained: *“This was a love story. This was a story of a marriage covenant bound by love, by steadfast love. ... The Lord, with whom I am blessed to have made covenants, loves me, and you, ... with a steadfastness about which I continually marvel and which I want with all my heart to emulate”* (Covenants and Sacrifice [address at the Church Educational System Symposium, 15 Aug. 1995], 2).

Hosea 2:19 - The husband promises to make a covenant with his wife if she would return to him.

Hosea 2:20, 23 - The Lord promises mercy to his people if they will repent and return to him.

This promise is important because we all need the Lord’s mercy extend to us.

Hosea 3:1-2 -In this scripture, the husband purchased his wife from her lover (in Old Testament cultures, women were often considered property and could be bought or sold).

Hosea 3:3 - The husband required fidelity of his wife after he purchased her.

In return, he promised to be faithful to her.

1 Peter 1:18-19 - In the sense that he has sacrificed his life for us, Jesus Christ “bought” each of us. In return for his sacrifice, Christ requires us to be faithful and diligent in his service.

Because of his love for his people, the Lord continued to invite Israel to repent and return to him.

Throughout the book of Hosea, the Lord reproves the Israelites for their great sins. After the Lord, through Hosea, describes the captivity and destruction that will result from Israel’s wickedness, he again invites his people to repent and return to him.

Hosea 11:4 - Another similitude often used in the scriptures to describe the relationship between the Lord and his people is the master-animal relationship. This similitude is used briefly here.

Hosea 11:7-9 – Through this comparison, we learn about the Lord’s feelings for his people—that he is deeply concerned about them. Note that the **Joseph Smith Translation** of verse 8 says *“mine heart is turned toward thee”* instead of *“mine heart is turned within me.”*

Hosea 11:1; 12:9, 13; 13:4-5 - Several times the Lord reminded the Israelites of how their ancestors were delivered out of captivity in Egypt.

Hosea 13:14 - This event is another similitude. As the Lord delivered the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt, so will he deliver them—and all people who come unto him—from sin and death.

Hosea 12:6; 14:2-3 - To return to the Lord and receive deliverance, the Israelites needed to repent of their sins and renounce the other gods they had worshiped.

Hosea 14:4-7 - The Lord promised, upon conditions of repentance, to heal and love them and bless them with prosperity.

The Lord makes similar promises to us if we repent of our sins.

The similitudes in the book of Hosea should help you understand how the Savior feels about you.

“O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself” (Hosea 13:9)

During Hosea’s ministry, the Northern Kingdom (Israel) was attacked by the Assyrians, who would eventually destroy the kingdom and take the people captive. In a literal sense the Assyrians were responsible for the destruction of Israel. But the Lord said, “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself”.

Hosea 13:9-10; 14:1 - In removing the Lord as their king, Israel had destroyed itself. Israel’s only hope for salvation after the destruction of their nation was to return to the Lord.

Conclusion

While the Lord’s blessings are reserved for those who keep his commandments, his love is constant and extended to all. Even when we turn away from him through sin, the Lord loves us and wants us to repent and return to him. Be faithful to the Lord.

God Reveals His Secrets to His Prophets

Lesson 35 – Amos 3; 7-9; Joel 2-3

Introduction

“When I was a young wife and mother, my husband spent two years in the air force. We lived in military housing on Long Island, New York. While tending our young children, I often visited with neighbors who had come from all over the country. One day as a neighbor and I were talking about our beliefs, she became curious about what was different about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I told her briefly about the Restoration, and I explained that the restored Church of Jesus Christ has a living prophet today. This really seemed to pique her interest, and she wanted to know what the prophet had said. As I started to tell her about the Doctrine and Covenants and modern revelation, she said, ‘But what has he said lately?’ I told her about general conference and that the Church had a monthly publication with a message from the prophet. Then she got really interested. I was so embarrassed to admit that I hadn’t read the current message. She concluded our conversation by saying, ‘You mean you have a living prophet and you don’t know what he said?’ ” (Ensign, May 1996, 84). If someone asked you what the living prophet has recently said, would you be able to answer the question?

Background: **Amos** was a shepherd from Tekoa, a small town south of Jerusalem. He ministered to the people of the kingdom of Israel from about 800 to 750 B.C. Most of these people were in apostasy. They loved riches, oppressed the poor, and were so hardened that not even famine or pestilence humbled them. As Amos confronted the people with their sins, he prophesied even more dire penalties. Nevertheless, he emphasized that God was eager to cleanse anyone who would repent, exhorting, *“Seek the Lord, and ye shall live”* (Amos 5:6). Amos also prophesied about the latter days. The prophet **Joel** ministered to the people of the kingdom of Judah. We do not know exactly when he lived, but his prophecies are of particular importance to us because many of them concern the latter days. Joel used the powerful image of a devouring host of locusts to symbolize the devastation that armies and God’s judgments would bring in the latter days. Joel also prophesied great blessings in the latter days, foreseeing that the Lord would *“pour out [his] spirit upon all flesh”* (Joel 2:28).

Amos taught that the Lord reveals his secrets to his servants the prophets.

We hear the word of the Lord in our day through his anointed servants—the prophets.

Amos 3:7 - The prophet Amos taught how important prophets are in this verse.

Amos 3:6-7 - Two words were changed in the Joseph Smith Translation. Footnotes *6b* and *7a*; in verse 6 the word *known* is used instead of *done*, and in verse 7 the word *until* is used instead of *but*. These changes clarify the meaning of the passage. The *Joseph Smith Translation* itself is an example of the Lord’s secrets being made known to a prophet for our benefit.

D&C 1:37-38 – The Doctrine and Covenants teaches that we should respect the messages of the prophets as if they were the Lord’s own message to us—and they are!

D&C 21:4 - 5 - As recorded in Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord gave counsel and commandment to the Saints on the day the Church was organized to heed the words of his prophet.

D&C 21:6 - If the Saints would do this, he promised blessings: the gates of hell would not prevail against them, the powers of darkness would be dispersed, and the heavens would shake for their good.

Each of us has seen this promise fulfilled in our lives as we have obeyed the counsel of the prophets.

Amos prophesied of ancient and latter-day Israel.

Amos 7:10-17 - Amaziah, a priest in the kingdom of Israel, asked Amos to leave the land because Amos had prophesied that evil would come to the people and their king. Amaziah and his people did not want to hear the truth about their evil doings.

Verses **14 - 17** teach us that the prophet Amos had integrity and courage. He would not change what the Lord told him to say but continued to prophesy that evil would come to the people if they did not repent. In all ages of time, many people rejected or ignored prophets’ messages—and had to deal with the consequences of their choices.

Amos 8:11-13 - Amos prophesied that spiritual famine, or apostasy, would be the result if Israel rejected the counsel of the prophets.

Those same results await anyone in our time if we reject the counsel of the prophets.

Amos’s prophecy of a spiritual famine was fulfilled among the children of Israel after the time of Malachi, the last Old Testament prophet. This period ended approximately 400 years later when John the Baptist was called to prepare the way for Jesus Christ. Amos’s prophecy also applies to the Great Apostasy, the

centuries of spiritual darkness that followed the death of the Savior's Apostles and ended with the restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

The absence of the word of the Lord can be compared to a famine because it indicates a spiritual famine. People today are wandering "from sea to sea" seeking for the word of the Lord but many of them do not know where to find it. Because we have the blessings of the restored gospel, our situation can be compared to a feast.

Amos 9:8-15 – The message of hope that concludes the book of Amos promises that the children of Israel would not be completely destroyed, they would be scattered among all the nations, and in the last days they would be reestablished as a great and prosperous people. Note that at the end of verse 9, the Lord makes clear that he is concerned about each member of the house of Israel.

Becoming at ease in Zion

Amos 6:1 - Amos warned the people about becoming "*at ease in Zion*".

2 Nephi 28:19-24, 27, 29-30 – Consider what it means to become *at ease* in Zion.

Joel said God would bless his people in the latter days and pour out his Spirit on them.

The prophet Joel described some of the events of the latter days that would precede the Second Coming.

Joel 2:1-11 - He described the march of a great army that would cause great destruction because of the wickedness of the people.

Joel 2:12-32 - He called on Israel to repent and turn to the Lord, promised that God would be in their midst, and described the eventual triumph and redemption of Israel.

Reviewing **Joel 2:12-32** and **Joel 3:16-17** reveals what invitations the Lord has given to those living in the latter days: **Invitations:**

- **Joel 2:12** - "Turn ye even to me with all your heart".
- **Joel 2:13** - "Rend your heart" (meaning to break your heart or be humble).
- **Joel 2:13** - "Turn unto the Lord your God".
- **Joel 2:16** - "Sanctify the congregation".
- **Joel 2:21** - "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice".

These invitations suggest that we must turn to the Lord with all our hearts. In doing that, we need to sanctify ourselves so we are worthy of the Lord's promised blessings.

Reviewing **Joel 2:12-32** and **Joel 3:16-17** reveals what blessings the Lord promised to those who follow him in the latter days. **Blessings:**

Joel 2:13 "He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and he will turn away the evil from you" (Joseph Smith Translation, **Joel 2:13**; see footnote 13*b*).

Joel 2:18 - The Lord will "pity his people".

Joel 2:20 - The Lord will drive the northern army (described in verses 1-11) into a barren place.

Joel 2:26 - "Ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied".

Joel 2:27 - "I am in the midst of Israel, ... and my people shall never be ashamed".

Joel 2:28 - "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh" (see also verse 29).

Joel 2:28 - Young and old will prophesy, dream dreams, and see visions.

Joel 2:32 - "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered".

Joel 3:16 - "The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem".

Joel 3:16 - "The Lord will be the hope of his people".

Joel 3:16 - "The Lord will be the ... strength of the children of Israel".

Joel 3:17 - "So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion".

These blessings demonstrate the Lord's commitment to his covenant people. He promises to be merciful, loving, protective, compassionate, attentive, and provide us with many choice opportunities in our days.

Joel 2:28-29 - Joel's declaration that the Lord would pour out his Spirit on all people in the latter days is a stark contrast to the famine that Amos described in **Amos 8:11-12**. The angel Moroni quoted Joel's prophecy to Joseph Smith and told him that it was not yet fulfilled but was soon to be.

Conclusion

It is a great blessing to live in the latter days, when many prophecies are being fulfilled and when we have the guidance of a living prophet. We should prayerfully study the words of the living prophet and apply his counsel in our lives.

“The Glory of Zion Will Be a Defense”

Lesson 36 – Isaiah 1-6

Introduction

The Lord often repeats the same idea many times throughout the scriptures. Counsel the Lord has given to help us endure the trials of the last days is found in D&C 45:32; 87:8, and 101:22. *“Stand ye in holy places, and be not moved.”* This phrase means being worthy at all times, desiring to be in holy places frequently, choosing not to go into unholy places, having confidence that God will guide you, and taking a stand for truth and holiness. Today’s lesson reminds us that the Lord has commanded us to stand in holy places and tells us what these holy places are. We may also draw strength from Isaiah’s example of willingness to serve.

Background: *“Great are the words of Isaiah,”* the Savior proclaimed as he commanded the Nephites to search Isaiah’s prophecies (3 Nephi 23:1). Isaiah’s prophecies are quoted more often in the New Testament, Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants than the words of any other prophet. He prophesied many things about the earthly mission of the Savior, about the destruction that would follow Israel’s wickedness, and about the mission and destiny of latter-day Israel.

Making our religious observances acceptable to the Lord

Isaiah 1:11, 16-17 - The Israelites’ sacrifices were unacceptable to the Lord. Although the Israelites tried to be outwardly religious, their hearts were far from God.

Some people—then and now—try to be outwardly religious even though their hearts are far from God. That kind of hypocrisy offends God because it is a form of mockery and dishonors him.

Isaiah described the condition of the world in the last days.

Many of Isaiah’s warnings and prophecies apply both to his time, which was a time of great wickedness, and to our time. The conditions described in the following scriptures are evident in the world today:

Isaiah 1:3-5 - Rebellion against the Lord

Isaiah 1:11-15 - Religious ceremonies without meaning or faith

Isaiah 2:7-8 - Worship of worldly things and military security instead of the Lord; note that horses and chariots were used as instruments of war in ancient times

Isaiah 2:11-12 - Pride

Isaiah 3:5 - Oppression of other people and failing to honor older people

Isaiah 3:9 - No shame for sin

Isaiah 3:14-15 - Taking advantage of the poor and failing to care for them

Isaiah 3:16-24 - Emphasis on outward physical beauty at the expense of righteousness and good character

Isaiah 5:8 - Greedy desires to own more and more material things

Isaiah 5:11-12 - Constantly seeking worldly pleasures instead of seeking the Lord and his work

Isaiah 5:20 - Saying that evil things are good and good things are evil

Isaiah 5:21 - Trusting in oneself instead of in God

Isaiah 5:24 - Despising the commandments and word of God

These prophecies are being fulfilled today as we see in the following:

Calling evil good and good evil:

Israel’s ability to distinguish between good and evil was impaired because they did not have the spirit of the Lord in their lives.

People today also call evil good and good evil, such as proclaiming that it is good to give women “choice” and control over their own bodies when abortion as a form of birth control is clearly evil in the Lord’s eyes. Evil is called good in the entertainment industry when “stars” are promoted as role models when their behavior is anything but model behavior.

2 Nephi 32:5; D&C 45:57 - We can ensure that we recognize the difference between good and evil by living according to the commandments and maintaining the companionship of the Spirit.

Isaiah counseled the faithful to stand in holy places.

Isaiah 4:5-6 - Certain places offer safety from the worldly conditions mentioned by Isaiah. Three holy places are mentioned in this verse.

- Every dwelling place of mount Zion (homes)
- Assemblies (stakes, wards, and branches; see also D&C 115:5-6)
- Tabernacle (temples)

Our homes can be holy places offering refuge from the wickedness of the world if we maintain high standards of behavior there, speak kind words, and observe the commandments at all times.

Stakes, wards, and branches can be holy places and refuges as we assemble there to worship, discuss the scriptures, uplift each other in good fellowship, and render service to each other.

A temple is a holy place and refuge as we go there to make sacred covenants, serve our dead by assuring that their ordinances are completed, and bind our families together through sealings.

These three holy places provide a defense for you against the evils of the world only when you stand in righteousness there and maintain or enhance the holiness that is there.

Isaiah 4:5-6 - Expressions used to describe how these holy places will protect us include the following:

- “A shadow in the daytime from the heat”
- “A place of refuge”
- “A covert [a hiding place or shelter] from storm and from rain”

Many of Isaiah’s writings are also included in the Book of Mormon.

2 Nephi 14:5 – The words *of Zion* are added to Isaiah 4:5 in the Book of Mormon.

Isaiah 2:2-3 – A prophecy about temples in the last days is included in this verse, stating that many people will come to the house of God and desire to learn God’s commandments and walk in his ways.

Isaiah described the temple as a “*mountain of the Lord*” because ancient prophets often went to mountains to commune with the Lord and receive counsel from him. He revealed his instructions and other sacred things to them there. Of course, we can have similar experiences in the temple today.

Isaiah described the gathering of Israel in the latter days.

Isaiah 5:26-29 – Here, Isaiah describes the latter-day gathering of Israel. The ensign that is being lifted up is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To “*hiss*” is to whistle or summon, which represents the invitation to the nations of the earth to gather to the Church. This gathering will be swift and powerful.

The prophecy that nations will be gathered to the Church is being fulfilled today as missionaries are going throughout the world to teach the gospel and gather people to the truth.

Each of us can help fulfill this prophecy by following the prophetic counsel, “*Every member a Missionary.*”

Isaiah responded willingly to his call to be a prophet.

The Lord called Isaiah to be a prophet through a vision in which Isaiah saw the Lord in his glory. This vision is recorded in **Isaiah 6**.

Isaiah 6:1-4 - Isaiah described the glory of the Lord.

Isaiah 6:5 - Isaiah’s response when he saw the Lord was to feel unworthy to be in the Lord’s presence.

Isaiah 6:6-7 - The Lord symbolically showed that Isaiah was clean before him by having a seraphim place a live coal upon his lips.

Isaiah 6:8 - When the Lord called for a prophet, Isaiah answered the call.

Abraham 3:27 - In accepting his call, Isaiah used the same words as the Savior did when He accepted the responsibility to carry out the plan of our Father in Heaven for the salvation of his children.

Some situations in which we may also need to answer the Lord with similar words include: when we are called to serve missions, when we are asked to serve in the Church, and when we are asked to endure difficult trials or endure tribulation.

Many chapters of Isaiah are recorded in the Book of Mormon, including chapters 2 through 6.

2 Nephi 11:8 - The prophet Nephi gave some of his reasons for including Isaiah’s writings in his record, indicating that Isaiah’s message should cause rejoicing and it could be applied to Nephi’s people.

Conclusion

The words of Isaiah teach us many things about the latter days. By studying Isaiah’s counsel, we can learn how to stand in holy places and avoid the evils of the world. By following his example, we can be more willing servants of our Father in Heaven.

“Thou Hast Done Wonderful Things”

Lesson 37 – Isaiah 22, 24-26, 28-30

Introduction

The prophet Isaiah did much of his teaching in symbolic language. This language does not teach directly, so we must examine and ponder Isaiah’s words to discover the truths they teach. Some of Isaiah’s most beautiful and profound symbolic language is about the Savior, who is the focus of this lesson. Today, we will consider how we may come unto Christ through recognizing some of the wonderful things he has done. Those things include the following:

- **Isaiah 22:22** - The Savior opens the door to Heavenly Father’s presence.
- **Isaiah 24:21-22** - The Savior shows mercy for those in spirit prison.
- **Isaiah 25:1-4; 32:1-2** - The Savior is a strength and a refuge.
- **Isaiah 25:6-9** - The Savior will prepare a feast and destroy the “veil.”
- **Isaiah 25:8** - The Savior wipes away our tears.
- **Isaiah 26:19** - The Savior will bring the Resurrection.
- **Isaiah 28:16** - The Savior is our sure foundation.
- **Isaiah 29:4, 9-14, 18, 24** - The Savior will restore the gospel to the earth.
- **Isaiah 30:19-21** - The Savior knows our trials and directs our paths.

The Savior opened the door to Heavenly Father’s presence.

Isaiah 22:22 - says that the Messiah has *“the key of the house of David.”* This is a symbolic way of saying the Savior has the power to admit or exclude any person from Heavenly Father’s presence. (See also Revelation 3:7-8; 2 Nephi 9:41)

To open this door for us the Savior gave his life.

2 Nephi 9:45 - To be able to enter this door, we must repent and come unto Christ.

The Savior showed mercy for those in spirit prison.

Isaiah 24:21-22 – The prison referred to in this verse is the Spirit prison, the place where the spirits of some deceased mortals go while awaiting the Resurrection.

D&C 138:32 - The spirits of some deceased mortals are in spirit prison because some of them did not receive the gospel on earth, and others were not valiant in their testimonies.

Isaiah 42:5-7; D&C 138:29-37 - The Savior opened the way for the spirits in prison to come out of the darkness. He organized righteous spirits to teach them the gospel.

Isaiah 49:9-10 – Sending missionaries and providing a way out of prison demonstrated the Savior’s love and mercy.

The Savior is a strength and a refuge.

Isaiah wrote of the Savior strengthening us during the storms, tempests, deserts, and heat of our lives. The following images teach about how the Savior helps us when we face such challenges:

- **Isaiah 25:4** - He is a refuge from the storm.
- **Isaiah 25:4** - He is a shadow from the heat.
- **Isaiah 32:2** - He is a hiding place from the wind.
- **Isaiah 32:2** - He is a covert (cover) from the tempest.
- **Isaiah 32:2** - He is rivers of water in a dry place.
- **Isaiah 32:2** - He is the shadow of a great rock in a weary (thirsty) land.

The Savior will prepare a feast and destroy the “veil.”

Isaiah 25:6-7; 2:2; D&C 58:8-9 - One interpretation of this is that the mountain is a symbol for the temple where the patrons will find a spiritual feast.

Isaiah 25:6 - The feast mentioned is a feast of the words and teachings of Christ. Temple attendance can be like a feast if we are prepared to be inspired and filled with gifts of the Spirit and eternal knowledge.

Moses 7:26 - A veil is a thin covering. Symbolically it often represents the unbelief that prevents people from truly coming to Christ.

Isaiah 25:7-9 - The “veil” that is over the earth will be destroyed when the Savior will remove all doubt that He is the promised Messiah and there will be no excuse for unbelief.

The Savior wipes away our tears.

Isaiah 25:8 - Isaiah prophesied that when the Messiah would come, he will wipe the tears off our faces. When someone you love is crying, you comfort them and wipe away their tears. The Savior will “wipe away [our] tears”. Picture a parent wiping tears away from a child’s face. There is a sense of intimacy in this act. It is a tender gesture that is shared only by people who love and trust each other deeply. Death, sorrow, crying, and pain are the conditions mentioned in Revelation 21:4 that cause tears. The Savior will wipe away the tears that are caused by these conditions by continuing the resurrection, cleansing the earth to bring it to a terrestrial state, giving hope, comfort, and causing rejoicing with his presence and his reign, and removing pain caused by wickedness.

The Savior will bring the Resurrection.

Isaiah 26:19 – Others to be resurrected in due time include all the children of God who have lived on the earth in all dispensations and throughout its history.

Isaiah 26:19 - This verse suggests that we will feel like singing when we are resurrected. (See also **D&C 138:12-16, 50**)

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: *“When the voice calls for the dead to arise, ... what would be the first joy of my heart? To meet my father, my mother, my brother, my sister; and when they are by my side, I embrace them and they me”* (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 295-96).

The Savior is our sure foundation.

Isaiah 28:16 - Isaiah tells us about the Savior by referring to him as a “tried stone”. **Mosiah 3:17** tells us that the Savior’s is the only name by which salvation shall come.

Helaman 5:12 - Jesus Christ is our “sure foundation”

To build on this foundation, we follow the commandments and live by guidance of the Spirit.

D&C 50:44 - The Lord promises that if we build on this foundation, we shall never fall.

The Savior will restore the gospel to the earth.

Isaiah 29:4, 9-14 - Isaiah foresaw the latter-day restoration of the gospel. He knew that it would come at a time of spiritual darkness. He also foresaw the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

Compare the following verses in Isaiah 29 with corresponding passages in the Book of Mormon, Pearl of Great Price, and Doctrine and Covenants to see how some of Isaiah’s prophecies have been fulfilled:

Isaiah 29:4	Moroni 10:27
Isaiah 29:9-10, Isaiah 29:13	Joseph Smith—History 1:18-19
Isaiah 29:11-12	Joseph Smith—History 1:63-65
Isaiah 29:14	D&C 4:1; D&C 6:1

Isaiah 29:13 - Isaiah told of people drawing near to the Lord with their mouths while their hearts are far from Him.

We need to assure that we remain close to the Lord in our thoughts and actions as well as in our words.

Isaiah 29:18, 24 - Isaiah said that the Book of Mormon would help the spiritually deaf and blind to hear and see.

This prophecy has been fulfilled as the Book of Mormon has helped clarify and add to the doctrines and teachings of the Bible so that as it has been studied, enlightenment occurs and understanding expands for anyone who wishes to learn of the Lord.

The Savior knows our trials and directs our paths.

Isaiah 30:19-21 – Adversity can be a learning experience for us. These verses teach what the Savior will do for us when adversity comes. He will give us teachers and inspiration and direction. (also Alma 37:37.)

Conclusion

The Savior has done wonderful things for us. Think about what we can do in return.

“Beside Me There Is No Saviour”

Lesson 38 – Isaiah 40-49

Introduction

- “What think ye of Christ?” (Matthew 22:42).
- “What manner of men ought ye to be?” (3 Nephi 27:27).
- “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? ... Whom say ye that I am?” (Matthew 16:13, Matthew 16:15).
- “Who is on the Lord’s side?” (Exodus 32:26).
- “Have ye received his image in your countenances?” (Alma 5:14).

These quotations have something in common—all of them are questions from the scriptures that help us evaluate our testimony of the Savior and our commitment to be his disciples. There are many questions like these in the scriptures. Part of this lesson focuses on scriptural questions that emphasize the greatness of the Savior, who is incomparable in his devotion to his people.

Isaiah taught that the Savior is incomparable.

Through Isaiah, the Lord repeatedly asked a certain question in different ways. That question is asked in each of the following verses:

- **Isaiah 40:18** - “To whom then will ye liken God?”
- **Isaiah 44:8** - “Is there a God beside me?”
- **Isaiah 46:5** - “To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me?”

The preceding questions are similar in that they all teach that the Savior is greater than any person or thing we could compare him to. Our god is truly incomparable.

Think of how you might have answered these questions. Then, let’s look at how these questions are answered in the book of Isaiah. Note that in each verse below that the Lord was speaking to idolatrous people who manufactured their own false gods of silver and gold.

- **Isaiah 43:11** - “Beside me there is no saviour.”
- **Isaiah 44:6** - “Beside me there is no God.”
- **Isaiah 45:5, 6, 14, 18, 21-22** - “There is no God beside me”.
- **Isaiah 46:9** - “I am God, and there is none like me.”

Think about why these questions and answers are repeated so many times in the book of Isaiah and how these questions and answers are relevant to our day.

Isaiah described the Savior’s incomparable qualities.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that we need “a correct idea of [God’s] character, perfections and attributes” in order to have faith in Him (*Lectures on Faith* [1985], 38).

Isaiah gives many beautiful descriptions of the Savior’s character and attributes. Read the passages listed below with the following questions in mind: *Which attribute of the Savior is mentioned in the passage? How does knowing of this attribute help increase our faith in the Savior?*

- **Isaiah 40:13-14** - No one counsels or instructs him.
- **Isaiah 40:28-31** - He is never weary; he strengthens us.
- **Isaiah 40:12, Isaiah 40:21-22, Isaiah 40:26; Isaiah 45:12, 18** - He planned and created the universe and knows every part of it.
- **Isaiah 41:17-18** - He hears us when we are in trouble and blesses us abundantly.
- **Isaiah 42:1, Isaiah 42:4** - He will not fail or be discouraged till his purposes are fulfilled.
- **Isaiah 42:16** - He lights and straightens the way for his people who are lost.
- **Isaiah 43:1-4** - He will help his people through their trials.
- **Isaiah 43:25-26; Isaiah 44:21-23** - He blots out our sins and remembers them no more.
- **Isaiah 44:2-4** - He pours out his Spirit on our families like water on dry ground.
- **Isaiah 46:3-4** - He carries his people from birth to old age.
- **Isaiah 49:14-16** - He will never forget us. We are “graven” in the palms of his hands.

Think about how your testimony has been strengthened by any of these attributes of the Savior.

The world (Babylon) competes with the Savior for our devotion.

Isaiah 47 Chapter heading and verse 1 –indicate that these prophecies are directed to Babylon and Chaldea. Babylon was a powerful city of the ancient world that was destroyed for its wickedness. In the scriptures, Babylon is often also used as a symbol for the wickedness of the world. In Isaiah 47, Isaiah warned that Babylon would be destroyed because of its wickedness. These warnings can also be applied to the eventual destruction of the world and its wickedness.

The following passages teach about the results of seeking after the wicked ways of the world.

- **Isaiah 47:1, Isaiah 47:5** - The world will be brought down to the dust and become silent and dark.
- **Isaiah 47:7-9** - Despite the world's thoughts that it is invincible, it will be destroyed and lose the things of greatest value, symbolized by the loss of husband and children.
- **Isaiah 47:10-11** - Because the world declares that it is greater than God, desolation will come upon it.

Isaiah 47:8, Isaiah 47:10 – One false claim of Babylon (the world) that is the same as the Savior's true declaration about himself is *"I am, and none else [is] beside me."*

The world's offers of rewards, in comparison to what the Savior offers, are worthless counterfeits. Even so, many people give their devotion to the world instead of to the Savior. It is part of our responsibility as followers of the Savior to help others see what the Savior offers—through our example as well as our teaching.

Isaiah 48:17-18 - The Lord promised great blessings to those who seek him rather than the world. These promises make us feel blessed and peaceful about following the Savior with all our hearts.

Isaiah described the mission of latter-day Israel.

Isaiah 49 contains many prophecies about the mission of latter-day Israel. These prophecies can help us understand the important work the Lord has for each of us to do.

As we read some of the passages listed below, consider the answer to this question: *What does this passage teach about our responsibilities in these latter days?* As we read, note that many of the prophecies apply both to the work of the Savior and to the work of his servants, the house of Israel [Isaiah 49:3].)

- **Isaiah 49:1, Isaiah 49:5** - *"The Lord hath called me from the womb."* We were called from birth to fulfill the Lord's work in the last days; see also **Jeremiah 1:5**.
- **Isaiah 49:2** - *"He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword."* This image suggests speaking powerful words of truth—the words of the Lord; see also **D&C 6:2**.
- **Isaiah 49:2**. *"In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me."* The Lord has protected us and prepared us for our great responsibilities; see also **D&C 86:9**.
- **Isaiah 49:2**. *"He hath ... made me a polished shaft."* Arrows with polished shafts will fly straight and true. We have been polished and prepared by the Lord to fly straight and true wherever he sends us.
- **Isaiah 49:6**. *"Thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."* The Lord has asked his servants to raise up and restore the remnant of Israel and to be a light to the Gentiles. In this way we can help bring salvation to the ends of the earth; see also **D&C 86:8-11**.

"But thou hast not called upon me"

Some of us occasionally feel that the Lord has forsaken us. We feel the Lord has withdrawn from us. In referring to that situation, President Kimball stated the likely cause and what we can do to feel close to him again. (Also see **Isaiah 43:22-26; Mosiah 5:13**.)

President Spencer W. Kimball said: *"I find that when I get casual in my relationships with divinity and when it seems that no divine ear is listening and no divine voice is speaking, that I am far, far away. If I immerse myself in the scriptures the distance narrows and the spirituality returns"* (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 135).

Conclusion

Isaiah's writings can help us develop greater love for the Savior and greater understanding of the work he wants us to do.

“How Beautiful upon the Mountains”

Lesson 39 – Isaiah 50-53

Introduction

Many Church hymns help us understand the love the Savior showed for us through his atoning sacrifice. This lesson will discuss some of Isaiah’s prophecies about the life and mission of the Savior.

Isaiah spoke of messengers who bring glad tidings.

Isaiah 52:7 - Isaiah poetically described people bringing a great message of glad tidings, peace, good, salvation, and the reign of God. Isaiah referred to the messengers’ feet because in the ancient world, before electronic communications were available, important messages were often brought by runners traveling on foot. Isaiah uses the messengers’ feet to symbolize the messengers themselves.

Mosiah 15:13-18 - The Book of Mormon prophet Abinadi explained that the messengers described by Isaiah include the prophets and also the Lord himself.

2 Nephi 2:6-8 – These messengers brought a great message of peace and salvation. In addition to the prophets, we are to take the message of the gospel to the world. Think about experiences you have had with sharing the gospel message. Then, consider your feelings about those who brought the gospel message to you.

Isaiah prophesied of the Savior’s atoning sacrifice.

The following prophecies are about the Savior’s atoning sacrifice and the blessings it provides us.

Isaiah 50:5-7 - This passage teaches us about the Savior’s attitude toward the great sacrifice he was to make in our behalf. He was not ashamed and was willing to take whatever he would be subjected to so that he might accomplish his mission.

Matthew 26:39 and **Philippians 2:8** teach about the Savior’s attitude as he faced great suffering. Even though He asked that the cup might pass from him, he wanted to do his Father’s will, not his own.

Isaiah 51:6 – A comparison is made between heaven and earth in this verse, contrasting the difference between that which is temporary and that which is everlasting.

Mosiah 16:9; Alma 34:10, Alma 34:14 – These verses assure us that the effects of the Atonement will last forever. Its effects are infinite and eternal.

Isaiah 51:22 – Here, the Savior pleads for his people.

D&C 45:3-5 - The Atonement allows the Savior to be our Advocate.

D&C 19:15-20 - The “cup of trembling” that Jesus has drunk for us is payment for our sins. To receive the full blessings offered through the Atonement, we must go to Christ with a broken heart and contrite spirit, repent fully of our sins, and covenant to obey his commandments.

Isaiah 52:3; 2 Nephi 26:27-28; Isaiah 55:1-3 – We are “redeemed without money” because redemption is free to all who will accept its price—repentance and obedience.

Isaiah 53:2-4; Alma 7:11-13; Hebrews 2:16-18; Hebrews 4:15 - These verses tell us about the life of the Savior—that he is acquainted with sorrows and grief from his own experiences, so he understands our sorrows and our grief and can empathize with our situation.

Those acquainted with the Savior have sensed that he understands their sorrows and grief. They have felt his comforting presence during their trials.

Isaiah 53:5 - The Savior was willing to suffer the pain of being wounded, bruised, and scourged because he is loving, kind, and long-suffering toward his people. (See **1 Nephi 19:9**.)

Isaiah 53:6-7 – The Savior displayed firm resolve, steadfastness, submissiveness and humility when he was oppressed, afflicted, and made to bear our iniquities. Sometimes we choose to

“turn [our] own way” rather than submit to Heavenly Father’s will. If we develop proper humility and gratitude for our Savior, his example will help us submit to Heavenly Father’s will.

Isaiah 53:10 - Isaiah said that “it pleased the Lord to bruise” the Savior. This meant that the Father was pleased to see that his son was willing to give his life and complete his mission in a voluntary sacrifice to prove his love for his Father.

John 3:16-17 - From this passage we learn that Heavenly Father’s love for us was so deep that he was willing to sacrifice his Only Begotten Son for us.

Isaiah 53:8-11 - The Book of Mormon prophet Abinadi gave a powerful commentary on these verses when he was speaking to the wicked priests of King Noah (**Mosiah 15:10-13**).

Mosiah 5:7-8 - According to Abinadi, those who are willing to follow him and be faithful to him will be the seed of the Savior, being adopted by him as sons and daughters; being spiritually begotten by him.

Isaiah 53:12 - At the end of a battle, the leader of the victorious army divides the fruits of victory among his followers.

Romans 8:16-17; 2 Timothy 4:7-8 – These passages tell us what the fruits of Christ’s victory over sin and death are. The fruits that he is willing to share with us are celestial glory, a crown of righteousness, and all the Lord receives as an heir.

Isaiah described some of our responsibilities.

Isaiah 51 and **Isaiah 52** – The following passages point out the responsibilities we have as those who have accepted the Savior’s Atonement.

- **Isaiah 51:1, Isaiah 51:4, Isaiah 51:7.** Listen to and obey the Lord; do not fear the revilings of men.
- **Isaiah 51:12-13.** Remember the Lord, who is the Creator. Do not fear Satan.
- **Isaiah 52:1-2.** Awake and put on the strength of the priesthood (see **D&C 113:7-8**).
Revelation 19:7-8 - Put on the beautiful garments of righteousness.
D&C 113:9-10 - “Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck”.
- **Isaiah 52:11.** Depart from the wickedness of the world. Do not touch unclean things; be clean.

Think about how we as members of the Church and kingdom can better fulfill each of these responsibilities.

Walking in the light

Isaiah 50:10-11 - Isaiah gives us a choice in these verses. If we choose to fear the Lord, obey the voice of his servants, and trust him, we will have his light to guide us and will not walk in darkness (**John 8:12; John 12:46**). If we choose to walk in our own light, which is compared to the light of sparks, the Lord warns that we will “lie down in sorrow.”

Conclusion

In **Mosiah 15:18**, the prophet Abinadi describes the Savior as a messenger whose feet are beautiful upon the mountains. One reason his feet are beautiful is that they bear the prints of the nails, the tokens of his atoning love. For most of us, the teachings of Isaiah have strengthened our love for the Savior and our desire to be worthy of the blessings of his atoning sacrifice.

“Enlarge the Place of Thy Tent”

Lesson 40 – Isaiah 54-56; 63-65

Introduction

The typical tent needs stakes. If the tent were not supported by stakes, it would collapse. Now, if we examined Isaiah 54:2, we would determine that the tent represents The Church of Jesus Christ. So then, what do the tent stakes represent?

President Ezra Taft Benson said: *“The term stake is a symbolic expression. Picture in your mind a great tent held up by cords extended to many stakes that are firmly secured in the ground. The prophets likened latter-day Zion to a great tent encompassing the earth. That tent was supported by cords fastened to stakes. Those stakes, of course, are various geographical organizations spread out over the earth. Presently, Israel is being gathered to the various stakes of Zion”* (Ensign, Jan. 1991, 2).

The first stakes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were organized in Kirtland, Ohio, and in Clay County, Missouri, in 1834. As the Church grew, more stakes were added as commanded by the Lord (D&C 101:20-21). Today there are hundreds of stakes located throughout the world. It is our responsibility to strengthen the stakes of Zion and prepare for the Second Coming and the Millennium. This lesson will focus on ways in which we can strengthen the stakes of Zion. It will also discuss Isaiah’s powerful teachings about the Second Coming and the Millennium.

“Lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes”.

Isaiah 54:2 - The phrase “Enlarge the place of thy tent” means that the Lord wants Church members to share the gospel with many people so it can cover the earth. Isaiah prophesied that in the latter days, the Church would grow rapidly and many people throughout the world would be converted to the truth [**Isaiah 54:3**].

Isaiah 54:3 – Additional counsel is given regarding the tent, or the Church. If we choose to follow this counsel we would do the following:

Isaiah’s Counsel	What We Can Do
Stretch the tent curtains and lengthen the cords.	Serve as full-time missionaries; share the gospel with friends and neighbors.
Strengthen the tent stakes.	Strengthen our local stakes

To strengthen the stake in which we live we can: develop personal spiritual strength, influence our families and friends to do the same, serve our member and nonmember neighbors, and accept calls from priesthood leaders to serve in the Church.

D&C 115:5-6 - Stakes bless people’s lives by being a defense and a refuge from the storm.

The stakes of Zion are places of defense and refuge for us as we gather together for mutual spiritual strength, uplift and support each other in times of trial, influence each other for good, and uphold high standards of decency and conduct.

“With great mercies will I gather thee”

Isaiah 54:4-10 - Although Israel was scattered for many years, the Lord promised that he would gather her to the true Church in the last days.

Isaiah 54:4-10 (cited above) - We learn that the Lord will be protective, forgiving and merciful.

Isaiah 54:13-14, 17 - Specific blessings the Lord promised his righteous servants include: instruction and peace for the children; freedom from oppression, fear and terror; protection from any weapon formed against them.

These promises are important if we are to have peace, happiness, joy, and progress.

All of Heavenly Father’s children are invited to find refuge by gathering with the Saints.

The following passages from Isaiah describe groups of people whom the Lord wants to come to him and find safety in the gospel:

- **Isaiah 55:1-3 - All who thirst.** The thirst referred to in these verses is a spiritual thirst. When we try to satisfy spiritual thirst by spending money and effort on temporal things, we are left completely unsatisfied. **2 Nephi 9:50-51; 3 Nephi 20:8** - Our spiritual thirst can be truly satisfied only when we covenant with the Lord, the source of living waters, and enjoy the companionship of the Spirit.

- **Isaiah 55:6-7 - The wicked who will repent.** The promise extended to those who repent is one of mercy and pardon.
- **Isaiah 56:3, 5-8 - Strangers who do not know the Lord.** To be accepted by the Lord, the strangers must demonstrate their love for him, serve him, keep the Sabbath holy, and covenant with the Lord.

These passages teach that the mercy of the Lord is extended to all who repent fully.

These passages also teach that we should view all of Heavenly Father's children as part of the Lord's family to be gathered in with us.

Isaiah 55:10-13 - Isaiah wrote that God's word can nourish our souls much like rain and snow nourish seeds.

Alma 32:28, 41 - God's word nourishes our souls and causes them to grow, expand and be filled with understanding.

The Millennium will be a time of peace and joy.

Throughout his writings, Isaiah testified that although there would be struggles, temptations, and suffering in this world, good would overcome evil in the end, and for the righteous, the future would be full of joy.

Isaiah prayed fervently for the Second Coming of the Savior, which would bring retribution for the wicked and great rejoicing for the righteous (see Isaiah 64).

Isaiah 64:1-4 – The message of hope and joy contained herein is that those who are righteous and prepared for the Second Coming will be blessed beyond their best expectations.

This message should increase our desire to endure to the end in serving the Lord because the blessings will be immeasurable—well worth waiting and working for!

The closing chapters of Isaiah's record present a beautiful picture of the Millennium, the thousand-year period of peace that will be ushered in by the Savior's Second Coming.

Isaiah 65:17-25 – records conditions that will exist during the Millennium. (see also **Isaiah 11:6-9**.)

- **Isaiah 65:17** - The Lord will create new heavens and a new earth.
- **Isaiah 65:18-19** - There will be great joy and no more weeping for the Lord's people.
- **Isaiah 65:20** - People will not die young; they will live to be 100 years old.
- **Isaiah 65:21-23** - People will enjoy the fruits of their own labors.
- **Isaiah 65:24** - Prayers will be answered immediately.
- **Isaiah 65:25** - There will be no enmity among beasts.

Isaiah 63:7-9 teaches about the infinite goodness and love of the Lord—he bestowed goodness upon them, accorded mercies, became their Savior, suffered their afflictions, saved them, redeemed them, and carried them.

Consider the ways in which the Savior has shown you *“the multitude of his loving kindnesses”*.

The true law of the fast

Isaiah 58:3-7 - In Isaiah 58 we learn the elements of a true fast.

One element of a true fast is giving a generous fast offering. President Spencer W. Kimball said, *“I think that when we are affluent, as many of us are, that we ought to be very, very generous ... and give, instead of the amount we saved by our two meals of fasting, perhaps much, much more—ten times more where we are in a position to do it”* (in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, 184).

Blessings promised for living the law of the fast in Isaiah 58 include the following:

- We become stronger in resisting temptation (**Isaiah 58:6**).
- Our burdens are lightened (**Isaiah 58:6**).
- Our physical and spiritual health are improved (**Isaiah 58:8**).
- We become humble and prepared to communicate with the Lord (**Isaiah 58:9**).
- We assist the poor and the needy (**Isaiah 58:10**).
- We receive continual guidance from the Lord (**Isaiah 58:11**).
- We have our souls satisfied in drought and become *“like a spring of water, whose waters fail not”* (**Isaiah 58:11**).

Conclusion

As we strengthen the stakes of Zion and share the gospel with the world, the riches of eternity await us. We can look forward to the Second Coming of the Savior and the peace and joy that will exist during the Millennium. The prophecies of Isaiah encourage us to remember that it is a privilege to serve the Lord and that he blesses his disciples.

“I Have Made Thee This Day ... an Iron Pillar”

Lesson 41 – Jeremiah 1-2; 15; 20; 26; 36-38

Introduction

Jeremiah 1:17-19 – The phrases in verse 18 were used by the Lord to describe Jeremiah as he set out to fulfill an assignment from the Lord. Kings, princes, priests, and all the people of the land opposed Jeremiah in his mission, but he valiantly did as the Lord commanded. Jeremiah was an “iron pillar” who had great strength in times of adversity and did not bend or break.

This lesson should encourage each of us to remain faithful in times of opposition and adversity.

Background: Jeremiah ministered during the reigns of five kings, from Josiah to Zedekiah (626 to 586 B.C.). With Josiah, he tried to turn the people from idolatry and immorality. But the kings after Josiah ruled in wickedness, and the people were in total apostasy. Jeremiah’s mission was to raise a voice of warning to these people, and his denunciations of their wickedness are among the strongest in all scripture. His was one of the last voices of warning before the Babylonians conquered Judah.

Jeremiah’s life was full of sorrow, but his response to trial can teach and inspire us. He was beaten and imprisoned for prophesying against the kingdom of Judah. His life was constantly threatened. But through all the adversity and opposition, Jeremiah was like an “iron pillar” (Jeremiah 1:18). The book of Jeremiah provides a personal, faith-promoting record of the prophet’s response to his life’s sorrow and frustration.

Jeremiah was called of God to be a prophet.

Jeremiah 1:5 - Jeremiah’s call as a prophet unto the nations teaches us that the doctrine of foreordination is exemplified in his life and service. As we review today’s scriptures, consider his foreordination and see if you think it helped Jeremiah to know that in the premortal existence he had been foreordained to be a prophet.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said, “*Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was*” (History of the Church, 6:364).

Jeremiah 1:6-10 - When Jeremiah felt inadequate to fulfill his calling, the Lord spoke reassuringly to him and touched his mouth, giving Jeremiah the Lord’s words to speak.

When we have felt inadequate in a calling or assignment, the Lord has also strengthened us if we were simply willing to follow his instructions and be obedient. He supports his servants.

Many people opposed Jeremiah and tried to prevent him from fulfilling his mission.

Jeremiah faced opposition as he fulfilled the mission given to him by the Lord:

- **Jeremiah 20:1-6** - Displeased with Jeremiah’s prophecies, Pashur, the chief governor of the temple, had Jeremiah beaten and put in the stocks. Jeremiah prophesied that Pashur, his family, and his friends would be taken captive by the Babylonians and would die in Babylon.
- **Jeremiah 26:7-15** - Most of the people in the land, including the priests, opposed Jeremiah and his message. However, Jeremiah courageously delivered the message the Lord had commanded him to give. **Jeremiah 11:19-21; 12:6** - Jeremiah was even opposed and hated by his relatives and his neighbors in the city of Anathoth.
- **Jeremiah 36:1-6, 20-32**. The words of Jeremiah’s prophecies were written down and read to the people. The king burned these words, and the Lord commanded Jeremiah to record them again.
- **Jeremiah 37:12-15; Jeremiah 38:4-13**. Jeremiah was accused unjustly and put into prison. He was later cast into a dungeon, where he sank into the mire. By order of King Zedekiah, Jeremiah was released from the dungeon and put back in prison.

Jeremiah 20:14-18 reveals how Jeremiah felt as he endured such overwhelming opposition. Obviously, he was somewhat discouraged at this time.

Jeremiah 26:12-15 - To help us when we experience adversity, we can learn from Jeremiah that he continued to obey the Lord and fulfill his calling even when he was persecuted and discouraged.

Jeremiah 2:13 – The Lord said his people had committed two evils. They had forsaken him, the fountain of living waters. And they had made for themselves broken cisterns that could not hold the Lord’s living water, meaning they had sought fulfillment and security in worldly things.

People described with these characteristics would have great difficulty accepting the words of Jeremiah because they were not spiritually attuned to the message. They would, therefore, be unable to respond to adversity as Jeremiah did with faith and continued diligence.

Elder Marion D. Hanks said: *“Material objectives consume too much of our attention. The struggle for what we need or for more than we need exhausts our time and energy. We pursue pleasure or entertainment, or become overinvolved in associations or civic matters. Of course, people need recreation, need to be achieving, need to contribute; but if these come at the cost of friendship with Christ, the price is much too high. ‘For my people have committed two evils,’ said the Lord to Israel; ‘they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.’ (Jer. 2:13.) The substitutions we fashion to take the place of God in our lives truly hold no water. To the measure we thus refuse the ‘living water,’ we miss the joy we could have” (Ensign, July 1972, 105).*

Jeremiah's prophecies that the Babylonians would destroy Jerusalem were fulfilled, as recorded in chapters 39-40 of Jeremiah. Jeremiah had been in prison during the siege, but afterward the Babylonians freed him and allowed him and a remnant of the Jews to remain in the land of Judah.

Jeremiah 42:1-6 - Johanan, the leader of those who remained, asked Jeremiah to seek the Lord's will for them and promised to obey it.

Jeremiah 42:9-22 - Through Jeremiah the Lord told the people to stay in the land of Judah and promised to bless them if they would do so.

Jeremiah 43-44 - But Johanan led the people into Egypt, where most of them continued in their wickedness.

Jeremiah was strengthened in adversity by his love for the word of God.

The following scriptures show how the word of God helped Jeremiah remain strong in times of adversity.

Jeremiah 1:9 - The Lord put his words into Jeremiah's mouth.

Jeremiah 15:16 - Jeremiah ate the words of the Lord, which is poetic language meaning that the word of God became part of him.

We can “eat” the words of the Lord as Jeremiah did by studying the scriptures and the counsel of latter-day prophets.

2 Nephi 32:3 - The Book of Mormon prophet Nephi counseled us to “feast upon the words of Christ”.

Jeremiah 20:9 - Jeremiah described the word of the Lord inside him as a “burning fire” in his bones. Jeremiah could not, therefore, hold back from teaching the word of the Lord because it was so strong within him.

“Clay ... in the potter's hand”

Jeremiah's visit to the potter is recorded in **Jeremiah 18:1-4**.

Jeremiah 18:5-10 - The Lord taught his people through Jeremiah's experience that if they would repent, he would mold them into something better, just as the potter had reshaped the marred vessel. He also reminded them that he had the power to destroy them if they did not repent.

This comparison applies to us today in that we can become better clay in the Lord's hands by being humble—by obeying, repenting, trusting the Lord, and seeking his will.

President Heber C. Kimball provided the following insights into the comparison in Jeremiah 18:1-10: *“All [who] are pliable in the hands of God and are obedient to His commands, are vessels of honor, and God will receive them” (History of the Church, 4:478).*

“There are many vessels that are destroyed after they have been moulded and shaped. Why? Because they are not contented with the shape the potter has given them, but straightaway put themselves into a shape to please themselves; therefore they are beyond understanding what God designs, and they destroy themselves by the power of their own agency. [These people] have to go through a great many modellings and shapes, then ... have to be glazed and burned; and even in the burning, some vessels crack” (in Stanley B. Kimball, Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer [1981], 270).

Conclusion

Today we have seen an excellent example in Jeremiah and we have noted the need for us to be faithful in times of adversity as Jeremiah was. We should search and ponder the words of the Lord until these words become fire in our bones, strengthening us as we do the Lord's work. Like Jeremiah, our challenge is to become an “iron pillar” for the Lord.

“I Will Write It in Their Hearts”

Lesson 42 – Jeremiah 16; 23; 29; 31

Introduction

If you could have witnessed or participated in any story or event in the **Old Testament**, which one would you choose? Why would you like to have witnessed or participated in that particular event? What is happening in the Church today that might be comparable to some of the events you have chosen?

Although Jeremiah had few messages of hope for the people of his day, he foresaw a time of hope during the latter-day gathering of Israel. This lesson discusses Jeremiah’s prophecies of the great latter-day gathering that we are participating in today.

Jeremiah foresaw the latter-day gathering of Israel.

The story of Israel’s exodus from Egypt is one of the most miraculous events in the Old Testament. It is referred to in the book of Jeremiah and in other books of the Old Testament, as well as in the Book of Mormon.

Deuteronomy 4:32-35 - Moses felt that the importance of the Exodus was unparalleled.

Obviously, it would have been a great experience to have been part of Israel’s exodus from Egypt. Many generations later, Jeremiah saw visions of a latter-day event that the Lord said would be as great as the Exodus (see **Jeremiah 16:14-16; Jeremiah 23:3-8**). Elder LeGrand Richards said that the fishers and hunters described in Jeremiah 16:16 are missionaries of the Church (*Ensign*, June 1971, 98-99). Think about what fishers and hunters have in common with missionaries – see Matthew 4:18-19.

Jeremiah 16:15 and **Jeremiah 23:3** - The event described here is the gathering of Israel and the growth of the Church.

Jeremiah 23:4 - The shepherds spoken of here are priesthood leaders and other Church leaders.

Jeremiah 23:5-6 - The King spoken of here is Jesus Christ.

These events are as great as the Exodus.

God will write his law in the hearts of his people.

The children of Israel relied on Moses to receive revelation for them during their sojourn in the wilderness.

Numbers 11:29 - Moses expressed great longing because he wanted the people to learn God’s law and learn to listen to the Spirit for themselves.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 - The Lord promised to establish his covenant in the latter days and everyone would know him. (See also **Ezekiel 11:17-20; Ezekiel 36:24-28; 2 Corinthians 3:2-3**.)

Our behavior is affected when we have God’s law written in our hearts. This helps us obey specific commandments, such as:

- Loving our neighbors.
- Honoring our parents.
- Being morally clean.
- **Keeping the Sabbath day holy.**
- Choosing appropriate movies, television programs, books, and magazines.
- Wearing modest clothing.
- Selecting suitable music.

Joseph Smith was once asked how he successfully governed so many people. He said, ***“I teach the people correct principles and they govern themselves”*** (quoted by John Taylor, in *Journal of Discourses*, 10:57-58). This statement relates to having God’s law written in our hearts.

Jeremiah 29:10-14 - Jeremiah prophesied that 70 years after the people of Judah would be taken captive into Babylon, they would return to their homeland and once again live in harmony with God (NOTE: the fulfillment of this prophecy is discussed in lesson 47).

Jeremiah 29:12-14 - According to these verses, we can draw close to God as we call upon him, pray to him, seek him, and search for him. The words *call*, *pray*, *seek*, and *search* imply something about the

attitude we should have as we strive to draw near to God. We must be humble, diligent, and sincere if we wish to draw closer to heavenly Father.

Now is the time to repent

The Lord's mercy is always extended to those who repent. However, people who postpone repentance may find it increasingly difficult to repent.

President Joseph F. Smith taught: *"The man with accumulated and unforgiven wrong behind him may find all retreat cut off and his condition in the world hopeless; and he who recklessly cuts off every opportunity of retreat by the neglected evils of the past is most unfortunate. The daily practice, then, of seeking divine mercy and forgiveness as we go along, gives us power to escape evils"* (Gospel Doctrine, 5th ed. [1939], 374).

The following passages teach about the importance of hearing the word of the Lord and repenting promptly:

Jeremiah 5:1-5, Jeremiah 5:21-25 – hypocrisy and rebellion were prevalent; they would not hear or see

Jeremiah 6:10-17 – the downfall and destruction of Jerusalem were prophesied

Jeremiah 7:23-28 – disobedience prevailed and the people hearkened not

Jeremiah 8:6-12, Jeremiah 8:20 – *"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."*

Jeremiah 13:11, Jeremiah 13:23 – still the people refuse to hear the Lord

Jeremiah 17:23 – the people refused to receive instruction

Hearkening to the words of the prophets

Jeremiah 7:13; Jeremiah 25:3-4; Jeremiah 26:2-5; Jeremiah 32:33 - Jeremiah frequently recorded that the people had not hearkened to his words.

Think about how we individually and as a Church follow the words of the latter-day prophets. Might we need to follow more diligently to be found worthy of the Lord's blessings?

Repeating the sins of previous generations

Jeremiah 11:1-12 - Jeremiah warned the Jews of his day that the sins they committed were the same sins for which past generations had been severely punished.

Jeremiah's generation would not learn from the sins of their forefathers, even when the punishment for those sins was so clearly documented. Think about why that might be so and then consider how we might benefit more fully from lessons learned by previous generations of God's covenant people.

The importance of trusting in God

Jeremiah 17:5-8 – Here, comparisons are made between people who trust in man and people who trust in God. People who trust men and the arm of flesh are cursed and their hearts depart from the Lord. They are such that will not see good come, but they shall be left in the desert and the wilderness. On the other hand, those who put their trust in the Lord will prosper and grow strong—strong enough to last through tough times and tribulations.

Based on what you have seen, think about which group you fit into and how accurate these comparisons are.

False prophets

Zedekiah was a king who wanted prophets to tell him what he wanted to hear.

Jeremiah 28:1-4; Jeremiah 37:19 – As a consequence of the king's attitude, many false prophets promised that Jerusalem would not fall.

Today many false prophets come "in sheep's clothing" (Matthew 7:15), telling people what they want to hear in modern terms.

Think about what messages today's false prophets might try to convey.

Think very carefully about how we can avoid being led astray by false prophets.

Conclusion

We live in a time that Jeremiah and many other prophets have looked forward to with rejoicing. It is our opportunity to participate in the gathering of Israel and to have the law of God written in our hearts.

“The Shepherds of Israel”

Lesson 43 – Ezekiel 18; 34; 37

Introduction

How is a shepherd different from a sheepherder? That question is answered by President Ezra Taft Benson: *“In Jesus’ time, the Palestinian shepherd was noted for his protection of his sheep. Unlike modern sheepherders, the shepherd always walked ahead of his flock. He led them. The shepherd knew each of the sheep and usually had a name for each. The sheep knew his voice and trusted him and would not follow a stranger. Thus, when called, the sheep would come to him. (See John 10:14, John 10:16.) At night shepherds would bring their sheep to a corral called a sheepfold. High walls surrounded the sheepfold, and thorns were placed on top of these walls to prevent wild animals and thieves from climbing over. Sometimes, however, a wild animal driven by hunger would leap over the walls into the midst of the sheep, frightening them. Such a situation separated the true shepherd—one who loved his sheep—from the hireling—one who worked only for pay and duty. The true shepherd was willing to give his life for the sheep. He would go in amongst the sheep and fight for their welfare. The hireling, on the other hand, valued his own personal safety above the sheep and would usually flee from the danger”* (Ensign, May 1983, 43). The shepherd walks ahead of the sheep and leads them; the quotation implies that the sheepherder walks behind the sheep and drives them. Part of this lesson discusses our responsibilities as spiritual shepherds.

Background: In 597 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon carried into captivity many people from the kingdom of Judah. Among these captives was Ezekiel, whom the Lord called as a prophet five years later. In 587 B.C. the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and took many more captives. Ezekiel ministered to his exiled people until 570 B.C. Ezekiel’s writings include stern rebukes and glorious promises that apply to the ancient kingdom of Judah, all Israel, and Church members today. Although Jerusalem had been destroyed, Ezekiel foresaw a day when Israel would be gathered and restored. This event is symbolized in his vision of the valley of dry bones and his prophecy about the sticks of Judah and Joseph.

The shepherds of Israel

In **Ezekiel 34** the Lord reproved the self-serving shepherds of Israel who had not fed the flock. He then described himself as the Good Shepherd who would gather his flock in the latter days and lead them during the Millennium. The “shepherds of Israel” spoken of in Ezekiel 34 are the religious leaders of Ezekiel’s day.

Ezekiel 34:2-6 - The Lord was displeased with the religious leaders who cared for their own needs while neglecting the sheep who then were scattered and became the prey of predatory beasts.

Each of us can be considered a shepherd of Israel because we are to watch over and strengthen each other as family members, Church members, neighbors, home and visiting teachers, and members of quorums and classes. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: *“Anyone serving in any capacity in the Church in which he 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).

Ezekiel 34:11-16 - True shepherds search for, seek out, deliver from, gather, feed, bind up, and strengthen their sheep. President Ezra Taft Benson said: *“We call on you to extend yourselves with renewed dedication. ... We want you to watch, to feed, to tend, and to care for the flock and, in the event that some are temporarily lost, we challenge you to find them”* (Ensign, May 1983, 45). Of course, the Savior is our example as the Good Shepherd.

Repentance and forgiveness

Ezekiel 18:21-22, 27-28 - Repentance and forgiveness are available if we turn from our sins.

Ezekiel 18:31 – When we truly repent we *“make ... a new heart and a new spirit”*. It is important to understand that repentance includes both turning away from sin and having a complete change of heart.

Ezekiel 18:24, 26 - People who turn away from righteousness and do not repent will die unforgiven.

Ezekiel 18:23, 32 - When he punishes the wicked, the Lord takes no pleasure in it.

Ezekiel 18:25, 29-32 - In the Lord’s justice and mercy, all are equally judged on their ways (choices).

Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of bones

Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of bones symbolizes both the Resurrection and the restoration of the children of Israel to their promised land.

Ezekiel 37:1-14 - The Resurrection was symbolized in Ezekiel’s vision as the bones came together, were covered with flesh and skin, and were given life. The restoration of the children of Israel to their promised land is symbolized in Ezekiel’s vision as the Resurrection is used to symbolize the restoration.

Ezekiel's vision can also be read as an analogy describing the renewal of the "hope" of Israel (Ezekiel 37:11). Although Israel's hope may be as dead as the "great army" of bones that Ezekiel saw, the Savior can bring it back to vitality and life.

The bones in Ezekiel's vision began to take life after Ezekiel told them to "*hear the word of the Lord*" (Ezekiel 37:4). The word of the Lord gives us life.

The stick of Judah and the stick of Joseph

Ezekiel's prophecy of the sticks of Judah and Joseph has a dual meaning. It refers to the latter-day combining of the scriptural records of Judah and Joseph (Israel). It also refers to the latter-day reunion of the kingdoms of Judah and Joseph (Israel).

The prophecy in **Ezekiel 37:15-20** has been fulfilled. The word *stick* in these verses refers to a type of wooden writing tablet commonly used in Ezekiel's day. The stick of Judah symbolizes the Bible, and the stick of Joseph symbolizes the Book of Mormon.

Elder Boyd K. Packer said: "*The stick or record of Judah—the Old Testament and the New Testament—and the stick or record of Ephraim—the Book of Mormon, which is another testament of Jesus Christ—are now woven together in such a way that as you pore over one you are drawn to the other; as you learn from one you are enlightened by the other. They are indeed one in our hands. Ezekiel's prophecy now stands fulfilled*" (Ensign, Nov. 1982, 53).

Ezekiel said that after the two sticks were put together:

- The children of Israel would be gathered together and united into one kingdom with the Savior as King (**Ezekiel 37:21-22**).
- The people would be cleansed and purified (**Ezekiel 37:23**).
- The people would observe the Lord's statutes (**Ezekiel 37:24**).
- The people would dwell in a promised land (**Ezekiel 37:25**).

Ezekiel 37:26-28 - Other blessings the Lord promised included one very important blessing—the restoration of the Lord's sanctuary or tabernacle, meaning the temple.

Learning to be a good shepherd

President James E. Faust: "*When I was a very small boy, my father found a lamb all alone out in the desert. The herd of sheep to which its mother belonged had moved on, and somehow the lamb got separated from its mother, and the shepherd must not have known that it was lost. Because it could not survive alone in the desert, my father picked it up and brought it home. To have left the lamb there would have meant certain death, either by falling prey to the coyotes or by starvation because it was so young that it still needed milk. ... My father gave the lamb to me, and I became its shepherd. For several weeks I warmed cow's milk in a baby's bottle and fed the lamb. We became fast friends. ... It began to grow. My lamb and I would play on the lawn. Sometimes we would lie together on the grass and I would lay my head on its soft, woolly side and look up at the blue sky and the white billowing clouds. I did not lock my lamb up during the day. It would not run away. It soon learned to eat grass. I could call my lamb from anywhere in the yard by just imitating as best I could the bleating sound of a sheep. ... One night there came a terrible storm. I forgot to put my lamb in the barn that night as I should have done. I went to bed. My little friend was frightened in the storm, and I could hear it bleating. I knew that I should help my pet, but I wanted to stay safe, warm, and dry in my bed. I didn't get up as I should have done. The next morning I went out to find my lamb dead. A dog had also heard its bleating cry and killed it. My heart was broken. I had not been a good shepherd or steward of that which my father had entrusted to me. My father said, 'Son, couldn't I trust you to take care of just one lamb?' My father's remark hurt me more than losing my woolly friend. I resolved that day, as a little boy, that I would try never again to neglect my stewardship as a shepherd if I were ever placed in that position again. Not too many years thereafter I was called as a junior companion to a home teacher. There were times when it was so cold or stormy and I wanted to stay home and be comfortable, but in my mind's ear I could hear my little lamb bleating, and I knew I needed to be a good shepherd and go with my senior companion. In all those many years, whenever I have had a desire to shirk my duties, there would come to me a remembrance of how sorry I was that night so many years ago when I had not been a good shepherd*" (Ensign, May 1995, 46).

Conclusion

Ezekiel's teachings help us understand how much the Savior loves and cares for each of us. He is our Shepherd. He is eager to forgive. He made it possible for us to be resurrected. He is directing the latter-day gathering of Israel. And he brought forth the Book of Mormon as another witness of him.

“Every Thing Shall Live Whither the River Cometh”

Lesson 44 – Ezekiel 43-44; 47

Introduction

Have you ever been excited while watching a sporting event or some other kind of entertainment? Have you ever been so excited at such an event that you stood and shouted or cheered? Can you think of sacred events that have been or will be accompanied by enthusiastic expressions of joy and gratitude? Some of these events include: The creation of the earth, the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, the Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection.

While the excitement of sporting events or other entertainment is temporary, the joy associated with sacred events is eternal. A sacred event in the Church where participants show their joy and gratitude by standing, shouting, and waving occurs during the dedication of a temple, the congregation participates in a great expression of joy called the Hosanna Shout.

“The Hosanna Shout is whole-souled, given to the full limit of one’s strength. The congregation stands and in unison shouts the words ‘Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna to God and the Lamb. Amen, Amen, and Amen,’ repeating them three times. This is usually accompanied by the rhythmic waving of white handkerchiefs with uplifted hands. The epithet ‘Lamb’ relates to the condescension and atonement of Jesus Christ”
(*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. [1992], 2:659).

This lesson will help us understand some of the many ways the temple brings joy. We are encouraged to partake of the life-giving, healing powers that are available in the temple.

Ezekiel saw a vision of the temple in Jerusalem.

We can learn about the temple in Ezekiel’s vision from these verses:

- **Ezekiel 43:2, Ezekiel 43:4-5** - The glory of the Lord fills the temple.
- **Ezekiel 43:7** - The temple is “the place of [the Lord’s] throne” on earth.
- **Ezekiel 43:7** - The Lord walks in the temple, calling it “the place of the soles of my feet”.
- **Ezekiel 43:7** - The temple is a place where the Lord may “dwell in the midst” of his people.
- **Ezekiel 43:11** - We learn about the laws of the Lord in the temple.
- **Ezekiel 43:11** - There are ordinances that the Lord wants us to perform in the temple.
- **Ezekiel 43:12** - Even the grounds that surround the temple “shall be most holy”.
- **Ezekiel 44:6-9** - Only those who are worthy should enter the temple.
- **Ezekiel 44:23** - In the temple we learn the difference between holy and profane and between clean and unclean.

Ezekiel saw a river flowing from the temple, giving life to the desert, healing the Dead Sea.

Ezekiel 47:1 - Ezekiel saw waters coming from the east doors of the temple in Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 47:8 - The water went into the Judean wilderness and the Dead Sea east of Jerusalem.

The Judean wilderness is a barren desert, and the Dead Sea is too salty to sustain animal life.

Ezekiel 47:6-12 - According to Ezekiel’s vision, changes will take place in the Judean wilderness and the Dead Sea will be healed because of the river flowing from the temple.

Revelation 22:1-3 - In a vision similar to Ezekiel’s vision of the temple, John the Beloved was shown the throne of God. A pure river of the water of life flowed from the throne of God in John’s vision. The “water of life” refers to the doctrines of the gospel.

We are like the Judean wilderness and the Dead Sea if we do not partake of the “water of life” because we will not be able to sustain life.

The “water of life” that is available in the temple heals and gives life to marriages, families, our ancestors, and the Church as we observe the doctrines of the gospel and reap the blessings. Other things also flow from the temple that give spiritual life and healing including truth, wisdom, revelation, and covenants.

Ezekiel 47:12 describes the trees that grew along the banks of the river in Ezekiel’s vision.

In common with the waters of the river, the trees had healing and life-giving powers.

Revelation 22:2 – Fruit bearing trees grew along the banks of the river in John’s vision.

1 Nephi 8:10-11; 1 Nephi 11:25 – These are other scriptures where the prophets are shown the tree of life.

1 Nephi 11:25 - In the dream given to Lehi and Nephi, the tree of life represented the love of God, which heals and gives life.

Ezekiel measured the river’s depth.

Ezekiel 47:2-3 - The first time Ezekiel waded across the river it was ankle deep.

Ezekiel 47:4-5 - The second, third, and fourth times he waded across, the river increased in depth to knee-deep, up to the loins, and then it was so deep that he had to swim.

There is a truth that these verses suggest about the temple—that the power of the temple increases in our lives the more often we attend. Wonderful truths are taught in the temple, many through symbols. If at first our understanding of these truths or of temple ordinances is only “ankle deep,” we should wade into the “river” again and again—or, in other words, attend the temple as often as possible.

“The Great Symbol of [Our] Membership”

President Howard W. Hunter said: *“I invite the Latter-day Saints to look to the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of your membership. It is the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church worthy to enter the temple. It would please the Lord if every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend. The things that we must do and not do to be worthy of a temple recommend are the very things that ensure we will be happy as individuals and as families”* (Ensign, Nov. 1994, 8).

“I have loved the habitation of thy house” (Psalm 26:8)

Many of the psalms mention blessings we receive from temple attendance and express beautiful feelings of love and thanksgiving for the temple.

Psalm 24:3-4

Psalm 26:6-8

Psalm 27:1, 4-6

Psalm 65:4

Psalm 84

Psalm 122

Psalm 134

Conclusion

The Lord has called the temple *“a place of thanksgiving”* (D&C 97:13). We should be thankful for the blessings that come because of the temple. Just as the waters from the temple healed the Judean wilderness and the Dead Sea in Ezekiel’s vision, the gospel of Jesus Christ will heal and cleanse us if we will partake of it.

“If I Perish, I Perish”

Lesson 45 – Daniel 1; 3; 6; Esther 3-5; 7-8

Introduction

Think about a time when you or someone you know had to show courage to obey the Lord.

Today's lesson is about six people in the Old Testament who showed great courage in obeying the Lord under very stressful circumstances. If we follow their inspiring example, we too will have the courage to live according to gospel standards no matter what challenges we may be confronted with.

Daniel and his friends refused to eat King Nebuchadnezzar's food; they were blessed with good health and wisdom.

As a young boy, Daniel was carried captive from Jerusalem to Babylon. He and other promising Hebrew youths—including his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—were trained in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 1:8-14 - Daniel and his friends proposed to eat grains rather than the king's meat and wine.

Daniel 1:15, 17, 20 - Blessings they received from the Lord's law of health included physical health, wisdom, and understanding.

D&C 89:18-20 - The blessings they received are similar to the Lord's promises to us if we obey the Word of Wisdom. Elder Boyd K. Packer taught: *“I have come to know ... that a fundamental purpose of the Word of Wisdom has to do with revelation. From the time you are very little we teach you to avoid tea, coffee, liquor, tobacco, narcotics, and anything else that disturbs your health. ... If someone ‘under the influence’ can hardly listen to plain talk, how can they respond to spiritual promptings that touch their most delicate feelings? As valuable as the Word of Wisdom is as a law of health, it may be much more valuable to you spiritually than it is physically”* (Ensign, Nov. 1979, 20).

Daniel 1:5, 8 - This story teaches us not to defile ourselves regardless of the pressures to do so.

The Lord saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from death in the fiery furnace.

Daniel 3:1-6 - King Nebuchadnezzar decreed that anyone who would not worship his idol would be cast into a fiery furnace.

Daniel 3:12 - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego responded by refusing to bow down to the idol.

Daniel 3:13-15, 19-20 - Nebuchadnezzar commanded that they be thrown into an over-heated furnace.

Daniel 3:16-18 - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego expressed faith that the Lord could protect them if he so chose, but if he did not, they would still choose to remain free from idol worship.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell said: *“We will [not] always be rescued from proximate problems, but we will be rescued from everlasting death! Meanwhile, ultimate hope makes it possible to say the same three words used centuries ago by three valiant men. They knew God could rescue them from the fiery furnace if He chose. ‘But if not,’ they said, nevertheless, they would still serve Him!”* (Ensign, Nov. 1994, 35).

The response of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego can teach us something important about obeying the Lord's commandments—that we should do it because it is right, not because we expect immediate blessings. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were willing to obey the Lord whether he protected them or not. Our obedience should not be conditioned on whether or not the Lord gives us an expected blessing at an expected time in return.

Daniel 3:21-27 - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were cast into the furnace but were not harmed, not even singed, nor did they even smell like the fire. And a fourth person appeared in the furnace with them.

Daniel 3:28-30 - The courage of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego persuaded Nebuchadnezzar that no other god was as powerful as their god.

Daniel prayed in spite of the king's decree and was thrown into a den of lions. The Lord sent an angel to protect Daniel.

King Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by his son Belshazzar. When Belshazzar was slain, “Darius the Median took the kingdom” (Daniel 5:31), and Daniel rose to a position of great prominence. Note that Darius the Mede is not the same King Darius who ruled the Persian Empire after Cyrus and to whom the Jews appealed while rebuilding the temple.

Daniel 6:1-5 - The king's presidents and princes wanted to find fault with Daniel because they were jealous that the king preferred Daniel, and they were worried that the king might give him more power.

Daniel 6:6-9 - These men convinced the king to sign a decree that put Daniel in danger. Knowing that Daniel prayed regularly, they persuaded King Darius to sign a decree that for 30 days all petitions must

be directed to him rather than to any other man or to God. Those who disobeyed the decree would be thrown into a den of lions.

Daniel 6:10 - Daniel ignored the king's decree and continued his pattern of prayer. We learn from Daniel's response that prayer was so important to him that he continued to pray even when his life was threatened for doing so. This should cause us to pause and ponder the value we place on the privilege of praying to our Heavenly Father.

Daniel 6:12-15 - King Darius was displeased with himself when his men reported that they had seen Daniel praying.

Daniel 6:16, 18 - The king demonstrated his belief in God by expressing confidence in God to Daniel, fasting and refusing to sleep.

Daniel 6:19-23 - Daniel was completely unharmed in the lions' den.

Daniel 6:24-28 - Daniel's faith and courage caused King Darius to issue a decree that the people of the kingdom would fear and tremble before the living God – the powerful god of Daniel.

Elder L. Tom Perry said: *"Not only did Daniel's service benefit the king, but because of the faith that Daniel had in the Lord, it affected an entire land. The king sent forth a proclamation that all the people of the kingdom should worship the true and living God, the God that Daniel worshiped. How mighty was the power of the service of one righteous man, affecting so many, as he served 'in the world' in which he lived! How effective will be the results of our service if we will continue to serve in our own personal way 'in the world' in which we live!"* (Ensign, 5/1988, 15).

Esther risked her life to save her people.

Esther was a Jewish woman who lived shortly after the time of Daniel. After her parents died, she was raised by her cousin Mordecai. Esther was very beautiful, and Ahasuerus, the king of Persia and Media, was so pleased with her beauty that he made her his queen.

Esther 3:1-4 - King Ahasuerus promoted Haman to be his highest-ranking prince, but Mordecai, a Jew, showed courage when commanded to bow to Haman. He refused to do so. Haman reacted with anger, persuading the king to order the destruction of all the Jews in the kingdom (Esther 3:5-14).

When Esther learned of the mourning among the Jews, she sent a messenger to ask Mordecai what was wrong (Esther 4:1-6).

Esther 4:7-9 - Mordecai asked Esther to plead for the lives of the Jews before the king.

Esther 4:10-11 – It was dangerous for Esther to go in and speak with the king because the law allowed the king to kill anyone who approached him uninvited.

Esther 4:13-14 - Mordecai sent Esther a message when he learned of her concerns about approaching the king, telling her to contemplate the possibility that she had *"come to the kingdom for such a time as this"*.

Esther 4:16 - Esther asked her maidens and the local Jews to fast for three days as she prepared to approach the king. Stating her intent to approach the king, Esther said, "If I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16). This declaration was very similar to the statement of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego before they were thrown into the furnace. (See Daniel 3:17-18.)

This declaration showed Esther's devotion to her people and to God as she resolved to place her life on the line to do what was best for others.

Esther 5:1-8 - When Esther approached the king, he received her and said he would grant anything she requested, so she requested that the king and Haman come to a banquet.

Esther 7:3-4 - On the second day of the banquet, Esther asked the king to spare her life and the lives of her people.

Esther 7:5-10 - When he learned that the people Haman was plotting to destroy were the Jews, he had Haman hanged on the gallows Haman had built for Mordecai, but the decree to kill all Jews had already been circulated throughout the kingdom.

Esther 8:5-6 - Esther asked the king to reverse the extermination order and he complied.

Esther 8:16-17 - Blessings the Jews received because of Esther's courage and faith included light and honor, and gladness and joy.

Conclusion

The Lord will bless us as we have the courage to stand for the truth. We should follow the examples of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Esther, and Mordecai that we have studied today. We should resolve that our strength and courage in spiritually and morally challenging situations will be a blessing to those around us as we live the gospel and make the difficult choices regardless of the cost.

“A Kingdom, Which Shall Never Be Destroyed”

Lesson 46 – Daniel 2

Introduction

Review the following growth statistics of the Church over the years: (April Conf. Report, Ensign, 5/2002)

	6 April 1830	1880	1930	1980	1995	2001(April)
Members	6	133,628	670,017	4,639,822	9,340,898	11,394,522+
Languages with published editions of the Book of Mormon	1	10	16	44	88 ... 39 full and 49 partial translations	100... 61 full and 39 partial translations
Stakes	0	23	104	1,218	2,150	2,607
Missions	0	10	30	188	307	333
Temples in operation	0	1	7	19	47	114

Daniel, an ancient prophet foresaw this triumph of God’s kingdom on earth—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Understanding his vision should strengthen our testimony of the restored Church of Jesus Christ and encourage us to help continue to build the kingdom of God on earth.

Daniel was shown King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and given its interpretation.

King Nebuchadnezzar had a troubling dream one night. He tested his advisers by telling them that he had forgotten it and commanding them to reveal it and its interpretation (Daniel 2:2-5; see footnote 5a). When they said that they could not describe the dream, Nebuchadnezzar ordered the death of all the wise men of Babylon, including Daniel and his friends (Daniel 2:10-13). When the king’s captain came to take Daniel to be slain, Daniel went to the king and asked for time to interpret the dream (Daniel 2:14-16).

Daniel prepared to interpret the king’s dream by asking his friends to pray with him. Consider how the prayers of family members and friends have helped you in times of need.

Daniel 2:19, 27-28 - The prayers of Daniel and his friends were answered in a vision.

Daniel 2:20-23 - After receiving the vision of the king’s dream, Daniel praised God immediately. His words reveal his feelings of respect, reverence, and gratitude toward God.

It is important to show gratitude to the Lord because he has told us that he is offended when we are not grateful.

Daniel 2:2, 19-23, 28 – These verses contrast the sources to which Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar turned when they sought answers to questions. The King chose to consult magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, while Daniel turned to the source of all truth and knowledge.

Some people today certainly turn to questionable sources when they need help answering difficult questions or making decisions—like 1-800-PSYCHIC. Lack of faith or lack of knowledge keeps many people from seeking God’s guidance in such situations.

Daniel described and interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s dream.

Daniel 2:31-33 - Daniel described the great image that the king had seen in his dream.

Daniel 2:31-45 - Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream included the following:

“A stone ... cut out without hands” (**Daniel 2:34**), Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon, Cyrus the Great, Media and Persia, Philip and Alexander the Great, Greece, The Roman Empire, and a group of European nations.

Daniel 2:36-43 – The different parts of the image represented different kingdoms that would succeed each other as world powers. The following interpretation was provided by President Spencer W. Kimball:

- *The head of gold represented Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom of Babylon.*
- *The breast and arms of silver represented Cyrus and his kingdom of Media and Persia.*
- *The belly and thighs of brass represented Philip and Alexander and the Greek or Macedonian kingdom.*
- *The legs of iron represented the Roman Empire.*
- *The feet of iron and clay represented a group of European nations.* (Ensign, May 1976, 8.)

In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, a stone destroyed the image that represented the earthly kingdoms. (See Daniel 2:34-35.)

Daniel 2:44-45; D&C 65:2 - The "*stone ... cut out without hands*" represented The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Kimball taught: "*The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was restored in 1830. ... This is the kingdom, set up by the God of heaven, that would never be destroyed nor superseded, and the stone cut out of the mountain without hands that would become a great mountain and would fill the whole earth*" (Ensign, May 1976, 8-9).

Daniel 2:34-35, 44 - Daniel prophesied that the Church in the latter days would consume the earthly kingdoms while it became a great mountain that would stand forever.

Daniel prophesied that the Church would:

- **Daniel 2:34** - Be "cut out without hands".
- **Daniel 2:35** - Become "a great mountain, and [fill] the whole earth".
- **Daniel 2:44** - "Never be destroyed".
- **Daniel 2:44** - "Not be left [given] to other people".
- **Daniel 2:44** - "Consume all [other] kingdoms".
- **Daniel 2:44** - "Stand for ever".

Daniel 2:34 – In saying that the stone would be "*cut out without hands*", the message was that it would not be man-made.

Certainly the restored Church of Jesus Christ is like a stone cut out without hands because it is a heavenly creation, not made by men, not run by men, but created by a loving God as a means to teach his children how to return to him and provide the ordinances and authority that would make that possible.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin said: "*Our Lord and Savior stands at the head of this church and directs it through his servants. This is the Lord's church; it is not a church of men*" (Ensign, Nov. 1993, 5).

Daniel's prophecy that the Church will "*fill the whole earth*" and "*never be destroyed*" continues to be fulfilled today.

President Gordon B. Hinckley testified: "*This Church is true. It will weather every storm that beats against it. It will outlast every critic who rises to mock it. It was established by God our Eternal Father for the blessing of His sons and daughters of all generations. It carries the name of Him who stands as its head, even the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. It is governed and moves by the power of the priesthood. It sends forth to the world another witness of the divinity of the Lord. Be faithful, my friends. Be true. Be loyal to the great things of God which have been revealed in this dispensation*" (Ensign, Sept. 1985, 6).

Conclusion

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God on earth and Jesus Christ leads it. The Lord wants and expects us to participate in building God's kingdom on earth.

“Let Us Rise Up and Build”

Lesson 47 – Ezra 1-8; Nehemiah 1-2; 4; 6; 8

Introduction

Elder Dallin H. Oaks: “We may ... find that a specific verse of scripture that was spoken for quite a different purpose in an entirely different age will, under the interpretive influence of the Holy Ghost, give us a very personal message adapted to our personal needs today. ... If we seek to liken the scriptures to our own circumstances, ‘that it might be for our profit and learning’ (1 Nephi 19:23), a loving Father in heaven can use them to bless us in highly individual ways” (Studying the Scriptures [devotional given in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, 24 Nov. 1985]).

Have you ever been reading the scriptures and felt that a particular passage spoke directly to you? Have the scriptures helped provide direction specifically for your life?

The events discussed in this lesson were set in motion by a man who found that a passage of scripture written 150 years before his birth spoke to him personally—in fact, it mentioned him by name. Today’s lesson is designed to encourage us to help build Zion and to show Christlike love to those who oppose the work of the Lord.

King Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple.

In 721 B.C., when the kingdom of Israel (the Northern Kingdom, or ten tribes) was taken captive by Assyria, the Assyrian empire was the greatest in the world. By 612 B.C., however, the Assyrian empire had been destroyed by the Babylonians. Under King Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon ruled most of the lands that had been conquered by the Assyrians. The Babylonian conquest of the kingdom of Judah (the Southern Kingdom) extended from about 605 B.C., when they took many Jews captive, to 587 B.C., when they destroyed Jerusalem. After Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C., Babylon declined rapidly in power. In 539 B.C., Babylon fell to the Medes and the Persians, united under the leadership of Cyrus. Unlike Nebuchadnezzar, who treated those he conquered with cruelty, Cyrus was a benevolent ruler. By treating conquered peoples kindly and respecting their religions, Cyrus won the loyalty of those he ruled. Shortly after conquering Babylon, Cyrus decreed that the temple in Jerusalem should be rebuilt. He invited the Jews in his empire to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple, and he returned the vessels of gold and silver that Nebuchadnezzar’s troops had stolen from the temple. (See 2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-3, Ezra 1:7. The prophecy of Jeremiah that is referred to in these verses is that the Jews would return to Jerusalem after 70 years of Babylonian captivity; see Jeremiah 25:11-12; Jeremiah 29:10.)

Ezra 1:1-2 - Cyrus decreed that the Lord had charged him to build a temple in Jerusalem again. Cyrus knew the Lord wanted him to do this. The words of Cyrus that are recorded in Ezra 1:2 refer to a prophecy in **Isaiah 44:28** that mentioned Cyrus by name (although the story of Cyrus comes before the book of Isaiah in the Old Testament, Isaiah lived about 150 years before Cyrus was born). The ancient Jewish historian Flavius Josephus reported that Cyrus read his name in Isaiah’s prophecies, was touched by the Spirit of the Lord, and desired to fulfill what was written (*The Works of Flavius Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews*, trans. William Whiston [n.d.], bk. 11, chap. 1, pars. 1-2).

When Zerubbabel and Jeshua led the first group of Jews back to Jerusalem, they found the Samaritans there. The Samaritans were descendants of Israelites who had escaped at the time of captivity and had intermarried with Assyrian and Babylonian colonists whom the kings had sent to occupy the land.

Ezra 4:1-2 - The Samaritans asked to be included in the temple building project.

Ezra 4:3 - The Jews refused to let the Samaritans help rebuild the temple because they felt the Samaritans were not true Israelites since they had intermarried with those outside the covenant.

Ezra 4:4-7, 11-24 - When the Jews refused to let them help, the Samaritans tried to stop the rebuilding of the temple by complaining to the kings who succeeded Cyrus. Work on the temple eventually ceased.

Ezra 5:1-2; Haggai 1 - The Jews were prompted to resume their work several years later when the prophets Haggai and Zechariah provided inspired direction.

Haggai 1:3-4, 7-8 - The Lord, through Haggai, told the Jews in Jerusalem that it was time to rebuild the temple. A disbelieving attitude among the Jews was hindering the rebuilding of the temple (see Haggai 1:2.)

The Samaritans again tried to stop the rebuilding of the temple when construction resumed. But the Jews explained the decree of King Cyrus, and King Darius allowed the work to continue.

Ezra 6:15-22 - When the temple was finished, the Jews celebrated with a joyful feast.

Ezra led another group of Jews back to Jerusalem.

Just as the Lord had earlier moved the heart of King Cyrus to free the Jews, He moved the heart of King Artaxerxes to let Ezra's group of Jews return to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:27-28; see also verses 11-26).

Softening the hearts of government leaders toward the Church also occurs in the latter days (See, for example, Thomas S. Monson, *Ensign*, May 1989, 50-53.) To encourage government leaders' hearts to be softened toward the Church, we can obey the laws of the land, do good, prepare to teach the gospel to all the world, and pray for the Lord to soften the hearts of the leaders. (See D&C 58:21, D&C 58:27; D&C 98:4-6.)

Ezra 8:21-23, 31 - Ezra proclaimed a fast to ensure that the group of Jews he was taking to Jerusalem was protected.

Nehemiah went to Jerusalem and led the people in rebuilding the walls to protect the city.

Nehemiah was the cupbearer for King Artaxerxes of Persia. This was a position of great trust and responsibility, requiring Nehemiah to ensure that the king's food and drink were safe. Even though Nehemiah was in a position of importance in Persia, he cared about his people in Jerusalem and sought to help them when he heard of their difficulties.

Nehemiah 1:4-11; 2:1-5 – When Nehemiah heard of the difficulties of his people in Jerusalem, he mourned and fasted for them and then asked the king for permission to go to Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 2:6-8 - King Artaxerxes responded to Nehemiah's request by granting Nehemiah permission to go, providing guards and an escort for safety, and authorizing the use of timber from the forest to rebuild the city walls.

Nehemiah 2:17-18 - Nehemiah encouraged the people to rebuild the walls around the city by testifying of the truth and sharing his spiritual experiences.

Sanballat was the governor of Samaria, and he and his people were enemies of the Jews who had returned with Zerubbabel. Sanballat opposed the plans to rebuild the city walls. The Jews responded to the efforts to stop the construction of the walls by preparing for battle to protect themselves (See Nehemiah 4:9, 13-15.) Sanballat asked Nehemiah to stop working and meet with him to try to distract him from the work (See Nehemiah 6:1-4.)

Some people try to distract Church members from the Lord's work today. Because that happens, Elder Marvin J. Ashton counseled: *"Certain people and organizations are trying to provoke us into contention with slander, innuendos, and improper classifications. How unwise we are in today's society to allow ourselves to become irritated, dismayed, or offended because others seem to enjoy the role of misstating our position or involvement. Our principles or standards will not be less than they are because of the statements of the contentious. 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. ... Ours is to be heard and teach. Ours is not only to avoid contention, but to see that such things are done away"* (*Ensign*, May 1978, 8).

The people rejoiced as Ezra read the scriptures to them.

After the people had finished rebuilding the city walls, they requested that Ezra read the scriptures to them. Most of the Jews had been in captivity so long that they had never heard or read the scriptures. Ezra read to the people for days. (See Nehemiah 8:3, 17-18.) The people responded by listening attentively, bowing their heads, weeping, and being joyful. (See Nehemiah 8:3, 6, 9, 12.)

Nehemiah 8:8 - Ezra read distinctly to help his people understand the scriptures.

Conclusion

"Nehemiah's energy, ability, unselfish patriotism, and personal integrity brought a new, exuberant Judah into existence once again. The restoration of Jerusalem, which had lain in ruins for a century and a half, was begun. Ezra, a righteous, dedicated priest, joined Nehemiah in this work, and together they succeeded in restoring a Jewish community in Jerusalem once again" (*Old Testament Student Manual: 1 Kings-Malachi* [1982], 314).

Just as the Jews had the responsibility to rebuild Jerusalem, Latter-day Saints have the responsibility to build Zion throughout the world. To help us do this, we need to follow the teachings in the scriptures and participate in temple work. Some people will try to stop the work of the Lord, but it is our responsibility to show Christlike love to them but not allow them to distract us from our efforts to build the kingdom of God.

“The Great and Dreadful Day of the Lord”

Lesson 48 – Zechariah 10-14; Malachi

Introduction

The scriptures refer to the Second Coming as a *“great and dreadful day”* (Malachi 4:5). President Ezra Taft Benson explained how it can be both, *“[The Savior’s] coming will be both glorious and terrible, depending on the spiritual condition of those who remain”* (New Era, May 1982, 49).

This lesson includes discussions about (1) the prophecies that Zechariah and Malachi made about the last days and (2) our preparation for the Second Coming. Sincerely considering these teachings should encourage us to (1) prepare for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, (2) pay an honest tithe and generous offerings, and (3) experience blessings that come because of the priesthood’s sealing power.

Zechariah and Malachi prophesied of many events of the last days.

1. Prophecies that have been fulfilled in preparation for the Second Coming

- **Malachi 3:1** - Malachi prophesied that a messenger would prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. John the Baptist prepared the way for the Lord’s mortal ministry, and Joseph Smith is the messenger who prepared the way for the Second Coming (see Matthew 11:10; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954-56], 1:193-95, 3:10-14).
- **Malachi 4:5-6** - Malachi prophesied that the prophet Elijah would return before the Second Coming to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers. This prophecy was fulfilled when Elijah appeared to Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple, restoring the keys of the sealing power (D&C 110:13-16).

2. Prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled before the Savior comes

- **Zechariah 10:6-8** - The people of Judah and Joseph will be gathered, and the people of Ephraim will become mighty. The Lord will “hiss,” or call, for his people and gather them.
- **Zechariah 12:2-3, Zechariah 12:8-9** - A great war will be fought in and around Jerusalem, but the Lord will intervene and save the inhabitants of Jerusalem from destruction.
- **Zechariah 14:8**. Living waters will flow from the temple in Jerusalem and will heal the Dead Sea and the Judean wilderness (see also Ezekiel 47:1, Ezekiel 47:8-9).
Many of the prophecies of the last days include tragedies such as war, natural disasters, and widespread wickedness.

3. Prophecies that will be fulfilled when the Savior comes

- **Zechariah 14:3-4** - The Savior will stand on the Mount of Olives, and the mount will be divided in half (see also D&C 45:48).
- **Zechariah 12:10; Zechariah 13:6** - The Jewish people living at the time of Jerusalem’s deliverance will see Jesus Christ and will mourn because they as a people have rejected him as the Messiah (see also D&C 45:51-53).
- **Zechariah 13:2** - False idols, unclean spirits, and false prophets will be destroyed.
- **Zechariah 14:5** - The righteous who are alive on the earth will be caught up to meet the Savior. The righteous who have died will be resurrected and will also be caught up to meet him (see also D&C 88:96-98).
- **Zechariah 14:9** - The Lord will be king over all the earth and will rule during the Millennium.
- **Zechariah 14:12-13; Malachi 3:13-18; Malachi 4:1-3** - The wicked will be destroyed, and the righteous will be spared (see also 1 Nephi 22:15-17, 1 Nephi 22:19).

D&C 45:56-57 - We can be prepared for the Second Coming of the Savior by being wise, receiving the truth, having the Holy Spirit for our guide, and guarding against being deceived.

President Ezra Taft Benson said: *“As we live the commandments of God, we can look forward with joyful anticipation to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and know that through our efforts we are worthy, with our loved ones, to dwell in His presence for all eternity. Surely nothing is too hard to gain this great goal. We cannot let down for a moment. We must prove, every day of our lives, that we are willing to do the will of the Lord—*

to spread the restored gospel, to bear testimony to the world, to share the gospel with others” (The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson [1988], 341).

Malachi taught about the blessings that come to those who pay tithes and offerings.

People “rob God” by not paying tithes and offerings.

The meaning of a full tithe has been defined for us by the First Presidency: “*The simplest statement we know of is the statement of the Lord himself, namely, that the members of the Church should pay ‘one-tenth of all their interest annually,’ which is understood to mean income. No one is justified in making any other statement than this*” (First Presidency letter, 19 Mar. 1970; see also **D&C 119:1-4**).

Malachi 3:10-12 - Blessings the Lord has promised us if we pay tithing include pouring out a blessing such that there will not be room to receive it, rebuking the devourer for our sakes, protecting our crops (or livelihood), and giving us a delightful land.

Should the promise of extensive blessings be our motivation for paying tithes and offerings? After referring to the blessings the Lord gives to tithe payers, President Gordon B. Hinckley said: “*Now, do not get me wrong. I am not here to say that if you pay an honest tithing you will realize your dream of a fine house, a Rolls Royce, and a condominium in Hawaii. The Lord will open the windows of heaven according to our need, and not according to our greed. If we are paying tithing to get rich, we are doing it for the wrong reason. The basic purpose for tithing is to provide the Church with the means needed to carry on His work*” (Ensign, May 1982, 40).

Malachi prophesied of Elijah’s return to the earth to restore the keys of the sealing power.

Malachi 4:6 - Malachi prophesied that the prophet Elijah would come to the earth before the Lord’s Second Coming.

This prophecy was fulfilled as recorded in **D&C 110:13-16**. Elijah appeared in the Kirtland Temple and restored to Joseph Smith the keys of the sealing power.

To “turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers” means to be sealed to all our ancestors—our “fathers”—and to all our posterity—our “children”—forever. Because of the sealing power of the priesthood and the temple ordinances for the living and the dead, families can be bound together for eternity.

Many of us have felt our heart turn to our ancestors as we have done family history and temple work for them.

The message in **Malachi 4:5-6** is repeated quite often and is taught in each of the standard works (Luke 1:17; 3 Nephi 25:5-6; D&C 2:1-3; Joseph Smith—History 1:37-39).

When will the Second Coming occur?

D&C 39:20-21; D&C 49:7 - The Lord has made clear that while he will surely come again, no person knows the exact time.

Elder Richard L. Evans said: “*Some of the brethren ... approached [President Wilford Woodruff] and ... inquired of him as to when he felt the end would be—when would be the coming of the Master? These, I think, are not his exact words, but they convey the spirit of his reported reply: ‘I would live as if it were to be tomorrow—but I am still planting cherry trees!’ I think we may well take this as a page for our own book and live as if the end might be tomorrow—and still plant cherry trees! In worrying about things that are beyond our reach, we should not overlook our opportunities with our own families and friends; in worrying about possible eventualities we should not neglect the things that need to be done here and now, and that are within our reach*” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1950, 105-6).

Conclusion

At the conclusion to this year’s course of study, we should be grateful for the teachings in the Old Testament that we have been privileged to study during 2018. Next year’s course of study is the New Testament with emphasis on the Savior’s mortal ministry and his teachings.