

GD21 - "Looking Forth for the Great Day of the Lord to Come"
Goose Creek Ward, Ashburn, VA Stake
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The quotation this lesson is named after taken from D&C 45:39. Lets explore D&C 45 so we can better understand what this quote means.

Historical Context of D&C 45

At the time the revelation was given the Church is officially 11 months old and has just undergone the first major exodus/gathering to Kirtland, Ohio. They are establishing themselves and attempting to proselytize the people of Ohio. The reaction they get is largely negative and the local press ends up slandering them and publishing falsely attributed "revelations" to them.

We read in the header to D&C 45:

At this age of the Church [i.e., early in the spring of 1831] many false reports, lies, and foolish stories, were published in the newspapers, and circulated in every direction, to prevent people from investigating the work, or embracing the faith. A great earthquake in China, which destroyed from one to two thousand inhabitants, was burlesqued in some papers, as " 'Mormonism' in China." But to the joy of the Saints who had to struggle against every thing that prejudice and wickedness could invent, I received the following:

[text of D&C 45 quoted]
(Joseph Smith, History of the Church, Vol. 1, page 158)

Additionally:

Not only did Ohio journalists of the early 1830s publish diverse and false accounts of the origin of Mormonism; they also ascribed to Mormonism various instances of unusual behavior that transpired in different parts of the world. The Painesville Telegraph, for example, published in 1831 a report that had appeared in the New York Journal of Commerce. It had no connection with the restored Church, yet was entitled "Mormonism in China." This account, which elicited complaints from Joseph Smith [footnote: HofC 1:158], asserted that "a sort of revelation from the gods" had been published in China, disclosing that during the year a great pestilence would erupt. The virtuous, this bulletin added, would be spared, but the wicked would not escape; and the ground would be covered with the bodies of those stricken by the epidemic [footnote: Painesville Telegraph, April 5, 1831, page 3, the Telegraph was published out of Painesville, Ohio]. (Milton V. Backman Jr., The Heavens Resound, ch. 4)

The Church members are generally discouraged so the content of D&C 45 brings joy to the Saints. Why?

D&C 45:28 And when the times of the Gentiles is come in, a light shall break forth among them that sit in darkness, and it shall be the fulness of my gospel; 29 But they receive it not; for they perceive not the light, and they turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men.

The Lord indicates that even though the light has dawned among them the Gentiles will reject Him because. Thus, the Lord is saying He knows the Church will not be particularly popular, and they are rejecting Him not the people of the Church. So, the people of the Church don't have to take it so personally. But, also:

D&C 45:30 And in that generation shall the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. 31 And there shall be men standing in that generation, that shall not pass until they shall see an overflowing scourge; for a desolating sickness shall cover the land. 32 But my disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved; but among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices and curse God and die.

The disciples will be protected at this day of punishment while the wicked will be cursed and destroyed. The natural reaction of the audience would be to assume that those who had rejected them and were persecuting them would be cursed by God and die while they were miraculously protected.

The early Restored Church was very much interested in the Second Coming and saw it as imminent, just as the Ancient Church did, and just as we do today. They were convinced it was about to happen. A review the articles published in The Evening and Morning Star shows that in almost every paper there was at least one article discussing either the Second Coming or the Last Days or the Signs of the Times, and sometimes there was an article on more than one in a single edition.

Smith even inquired of the Lord when it would be:

D&C 130:14 I was once praying very earnestly to know the time of the coming of the Son of Man, when I heard a voice repeat the following: 15 Joseph, my son, if thou livest until thou art eighty-five years old, thou shalt see the face of the Son of Man; therefore let this suffice, and trouble me no more on this matter. 16 I was left thus, without being able to decide whether this coming referred to the beginning of the millennium or to some previous appearing, or whether I should die and thus see his face. 17 I believe the coming of the Son of Man will not be any sooner than that time.

But what was the Lord's response? He says something completely ambiguous and then says "trouble me no more on this matter." Why? Because the Lord has no interest whatsoever in telling anyone at all when the Second Coming is.

Matt. 24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no [man], no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

Signs of the Times

Instead of a specific time, the Lord gives signs of the time, indicators to show when the time is near.

D&C 45:37 Ye look and behold the figtrees, and ye see them with your eyes, and ye say when they begin to shoot forth, and their leaves are yet tender, that summer is now nigh at hand; 38 Even so it shall be in that day when they shall see all these things, then shall they know that the hour is nigh. 39 And it shall come to pass that he that feareth me shall be **looking forth for the great day of the Lord to come**, even for the signs of the coming of the Son of Man. 40 And they shall see signs and wonders, for they shall be shown forth in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath.

But, by and large, we are misusing these signs of the times. These signs are given to us to show when it is NOT the Second Coming more so than when it is. For example:

Matt 24:1 AND Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to [him] for to shew him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. 3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what [shall be] the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. 6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all [these things] must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. 8 All these [are] the beginning of sorrows....

23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here [is] Christ, or there; believe [it] not. 24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if [it were] possible, they shall deceive the very elect. 25 Behold, I have told you before. 26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, [he is] in the secret chambers; believe [it] not....

32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer [is] nigh: 33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, [even] at the doors.

The disciples want to know when the end of the world is, but Jesus doesn't answer their question. Instead Jesus tells them how they can know when it isn't the end of the world because he doesn't want them to be sign-seekers who can easily be deceived by signs.

Jesus then teaches them the parable of the Ten Virgins

Matthew 25:1 THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. 2 And five of them were wise, and five [were] foolish. 3 They that [were] foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: 4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. 6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. 7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. 9 But the wise answered, saying, [Not so]; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. 10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. 11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. 12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

He then closes it by saying:

Matthew 25:13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

What Jesus is saying is "Be prepared at any time". The signs that are given are given to us so we may know when the Second Coming isn't, not when it is. The Lord's intent is that we should be prepared at any time.

He that feareth me...

If we aren't supposed to be looking for the signs of the times, then what is we are supposed to be looking for?

D&C 45:39 And it shall come to pass that he that feareth me shall be looking forth for the great day of the Lord to come, even for the signs of the coming of the Son of Man.

Those that fear the Lord will be looking for the great day of the Lord, what they will be looking for is this:

D&C 45:56 And at that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins. 57 For they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived--verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day. 58 And the earth shall be given unto them for an inheritance; and they shall multiply and wax strong, and their children shall grow up without sin unto salvation. 59 For the Lord shall be in their midst, and his glory shall be upon them, and he will be their king and their lawgiver.

We should be looking forward to this happening and making sure

that we are like the wise virgins so that when it happens we get it.

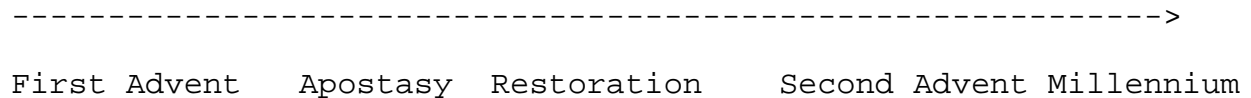
The Lord's point is for us to look forward to this event and make sure that when it happens, whenever it happens, we will not be hewn down.

If we know the Day of the Lord is coming, then we know we need to be prepared. If we really do fear the Lord, then we will prepare ourselves for the day of the Lord. Sign-seekers are not what the Lord wants, never has, never will.

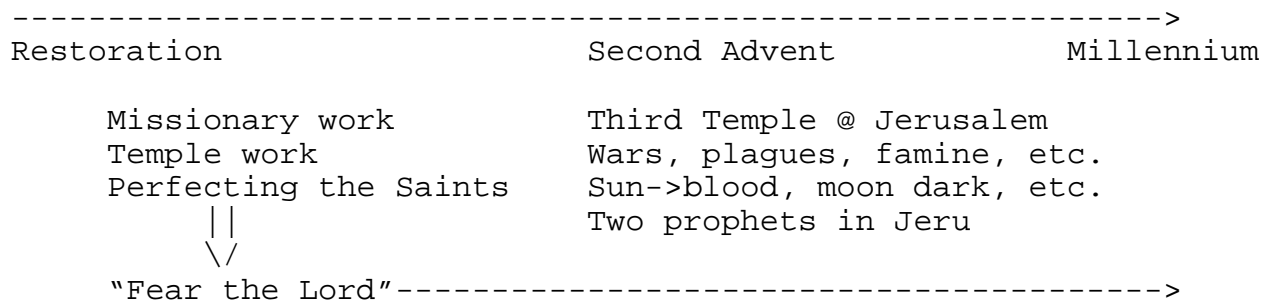
Day of the Lord is Part of a Process

The Second Coming or Day of the Lord is one part of a long series of a events. If we look at it as part of a process rather than a specific event, it changes our attitude towards it.

We can construct a time line from the events described in the Scriptures.



We are most interested in the current and future things, so we focus most closely on the Restoration, Second Advent and a little on the Millennium. So, we have a more detailed version:



The "Fear the Lord" things we need to do now are those things which will get us through the Second Advent into the Millennium. The rest we know about the Second Advent is there to let us know it hasn't happened yet so we cannot be deceived. If we are looking at them as signs and not doing the "Fear the Lord" stuff, then we will not make it through to the Millennium because we

will be deceived.

What is "The Day of the Lord"? - In the event of question from class member

This phrase "the day of the Lord", is from the OT prophets and is rhetorically charged.

Joel 1:14 Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders [and] all the inhabitants of the land [into] the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD, 15 Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD [is] at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.

Isaiah 13:6 Howl ye; for the day of the LORD [is] at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. 7 Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: 8 And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces [shall be as] flames. 9 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. 10 For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. 11 And I will punish the world for [their] evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

Isaiah 33:10 Now will I rise, saith the LORD; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself. 11 Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, [as] fire, shall devour you. 12 And the people shall be [as] the burnings of lime: [as] thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire. 13 Hear, ye [that are] far off, what I have done; and, ye [that are] near, acknowledge my might. 14 The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? 15 He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;

Malachi 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

In the book of Revelation, John uses a lot of OT imagery and rhetoric to describe the Second Coming. The rhetoric and imagery he uses is from the OT accounts of the Day of the Lord.