

D&C Lesson # 37
“We Thank Thee O God for a Prophet”
(D&C 21; 43:1-7)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Here is inspirational background and supportive true accounts)

I. We must not minimize what **a great blessing it was to the world to have a prophet of the Lord know and speak the Word of the Lord again.**

A. The ancient apostles were slain, leaving the world in darkness, without prophetic word.

B. The Lord had actually warned this would happen.

“People will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the Lord, but they will not find it” (Amos 8:11-12).

C. But He had also foretold **in many different ways there would be new light shed on Israel by new prophets in the Last Days.**

1. After telling the Romans that Israel had stumbled so that the Gospel might go to the Gentiles, Paul warned the Gentiles they must beware of pride lest they similarly stumble into apostasy, and the Gospel be returned to Israel. Then he told them this will indeed come to pass. **“There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob”** (Romans 11:26).

2. We have not paid enough attention to this prophecy of Joseph Smith, the first Latter-day Prophet.

II. So it was a great and bright Day when that time had finally come, and the Lord told Joseph, “Thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord, Jesus Christ” (D&C 21:1).

A. And it was a choice blessing when the Lord bore witness to the people: “Him have I inspired **to move the cause of Zion** in mighty power for good, and his diligence I know, and his prayers I have heard” (D&C 21:7). (Emphasis added)

B. The Lord revealed something very precious here **about Joseph’s love.** For He goes on to say: “Yea, his **weeping for Zion** I have seen, and I will cause that he shall mourn for her no longer;” (D&C 21:8). (Emphasis added)

C. **The Lord is also connecting this event to Paul’s prophecy of a Deliverer of Zion.**

D. And He is also anticipating that time that Joseph, as prophet, under the Lord’s direction, would send Orson Hyde in 1841 to Jerusalem to dedicate it to the return of the Jews.

III. The fact that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints indeed had a first and many succeeding prophets should be recognized from its history.

A. There was suddenly tremendous new spiritual knowledge poured out upon man, resolving old dilemmas and conundrums: How could God be a God of love and allow so many to perish in Hell? How could God allow men to invest so much love into marriages and families, and yet have those relationships dissolve at death?

1. Many very wise men have praised the teachings of Joseph Smith, although they have been unwilling to accept them as revelation from the Lord.

2. In fact, one of the most honored men of wisdom is C.S. Lewis, whose later teachings include many of the same concepts Joseph taught (Such as the Godly potential of men). While

Lewis is honored for his wisdom, notice that his teachings have not had the power to organize and move men, as did Joseph's. **But Joseph was able to organize and move men precisely because his wisdom *did* come from revelation and the Lord!**

IV. One of the biggest witnesses of having True Prophets in these days is that their prophecies have and are continually coming to pass.

A. Today we are seeing their literal fulfillment!

B. While many prophets through the centuries have foretold the great Last Day disasters (wars, famines, earthquakes, etc.), only His true Latter-day prophets have foretold one significant one.

C. D&C 88: 90 first warns that in these last days we will see “waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds.”

Brigham Young gave a significant addition:

Those **heaving seas would end up “engulphing many mighty cities!”** (*Journal of Discourses*, 8:123).

V. The fact that a new, struggling religion not only survived, but moved itself time and time again under the deepest persecutions to become a world-wide, positive influence, is another evidence it has been continually led by prophets.

A. In fact prophecy after prophecy given in the ancient scriptures about a Latter-day Israel can be shown **to fit best and most completely this new faith and religious organization.**

1. Brigham Young and his saints were now established in the tops of the Western Mountains, against all odds!

2. And that Church continues to grow and spread throughout the world, lifting up and bringing joy and peace to all those who abide its teachings.

VI. The prophets of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints fulfill the traditional roles of prophets, which is not just to proclaim the future, though they have done this, but also to keep those who will listen established upon “the Rock of Jesus Christ.”

A. There has been a shifting of positions among religions concerning moral standards, as they have been alarmed by loss of membership and have sought to change moral standards to accommodate modern trends.

B. But **the role of true prophets is to proclaim God's word, regardless of shifting moral standards.** (All the while showing compassion and ministering to those trapped in sin).

C. The true prophets of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints continue to stand firm in terms of the Lord's true principles today.

VII. True Prophets are manifest by their power to change and save lives

A. The words and acts of our modern-day prophets have changed countless lives.

B. A dear friend has shared with me how a prophet helped her come back after transgression. She gave me permission to share her story. [Real names are not used].

“I have been facing the most serious and miserable trial in my life for the past four months. I did wrong and I suffered as a consequence.

“When I reflect on this trial, I think it's not a single episode; its root can be traced back. I had faith in Jesus Christ, but not strong enough. I liked His and His prophets' teachings, but it was like a buffet dinner. I studied the teachings, but only followed those I liked. I also loved worldly

praise, e.g. earning more money, getting promotions, being admired by males. Yet for the past few years, my husband and I had enjoyed very happy times. My contract job became a full-time accounting and administrative job; my professional exams went steady and well. We had no complaints with my husband's business. We were married in the temple. I served in the Church. And I didn't need any special blessings or help then. I still kept all the commandments, but I could feel my heart was not as close to my Lord as before.

“After our temple sealing, challenges started to emerge.

[She then goes on to describe a series of events which caused her to lose her faith and to resist all the initial attempts to bring her back.

One of the things which finally did bring her back was a talk given by leaders of the Church. Here is her final statement]:

“As I felt ashamed before the Lord, I read another address from President Uchtdorf, ... It was for the priesthood session of last general conference. He said: 'It can be discouraging at times to know what it means to be a son of God and yet come up short. The adversary likes to take advantage of these feelings. Satan would rather that you define yourself by your sins instead of your divine potential. Brethren, don't listen to him. We have all seen a toddler learn to walk. He takes a small step and totters. He falls. Do we scold such an attempt? Of course not. What father would punish a toddler for stumbling? We encourage, we applaud, and we praise because with every small step, the child is becoming more like his parents.

‘Now, brethren, compared to the perfection of God, we mortals are scarcely more than awkward, faltering toddlers. But our loving Heavenly Father wants us to become more like Him, and, dear brethren, that should be our eternal goal too. God understands that we get there not in an instant but by taking one step at a time.’”

“When I read this, I wept.

“After learning of my emotional and physical challenge, the second counselor of the Relief Society offered to accompany me through an endowment session in the temple. Before this trial, I could not understand the temple endowment. Though I did want to learn, I made no progress. Now, almost every word I hear from the endowment can pierce my heart. Afterwards, John and I prayed in the Celestial Room.”

My friend is now on the path back to the Lord. While many things helped her return, *the words of a prophet* were key in helping her recognize her situation while lost, assuring her of the deep love of the Savior, who had atoned for her sins. He testified the Lord was willing to forgive her and lovingly accept her back, with full fellowship.

We cannot know how many lives have been blessed by the words of the prophets. But there is no doubt my friend's story can be multiplied by many thousands, and perhaps millions.

VIII. We should indeed be thankful the Lord has not left us guideless, but has provided for us modern day prophets. And then we should let them bless our lives!

A. Remember what the Lord counseled in establishing the first prophet of His Latter-day Church? “Wherefore, meaning the Church, **thou shalt give heed unto all his words, and the commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me**” (D&C 21:4).

B. Those who *are* truly thankful, will hearken, and will therefore be forever blessed.

C. We are promised that hearkening to the prophets will then lead us to higher paths of Holiness.

