

New Testament Lesson # 41
October 21-27
“Be Not Soon Shaken in Mind, or Be Troubled”
1 and 2 Thessalonians
By Lenet Hadley Read

- I. The Lord prepared far in advance for the spread of His gospel to the Gentiles.
- A. The Lord prepared Paul as a *chosen vessel* to spread the gospel to them.
1. “for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15).
 1. Latter-day Saints understand he, like all prophets, was foreordained even before the creation for his great mission. And the facts of his life enabled him.
 2. Roman citizenship allowed Paul to travel under protection (Acts 16:38-39).
 - a. As Roman citizen, Paul was entitled to “an impartial trial; to an appeal to the emperor; to freedom from degrading punishments, including bonds, scourging, and crucifixion” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*). He was obviously not always granted these, however.
- II. . **The Lord used his prophets to strengthen his churches, once established.**
- A. Paul repeatedly visited, or sent others to visit, areas where churches had been established. He also wrote letters to strengthen them. Just as our leaders do today.
- B. Paul warned the early Saints about the impending apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2).
- C. Paul further taught of the Second Coming (1 Thess. 4:13-18). Though he taught it would not come until after the time of apostasy (2 Thess. 2:3).
- D. The Lord in His wisdom, guided His leaders to write to those of their day, **but those writings were also meant to be passed down and to speak to us in our days.**
1. Thus Paul’s epistles to the Thessalonians help us prepare for the Second Coming.
 2. We learn that while it will come as a “thief in the night” to the world in general, saints can be prepared by “sober watching” (1 Thess. 5:2-8).
 3. One of the great blessings of hope and comfort is given in 1 Thessalonians. “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: **Thus we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.** Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; See also D&C 88:96-98).
- III. While Paul’s services were immense, **it is important to know Paul was not the only apostle actively spreading the Gospel.**
- A. “Peter, James, and John acted as the First Presidency of the Church in their day.” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:152). They were called by God to serve in this capacity and Paul served under their direction. Apparently they spent most of their time teaching the Jews, while Paul was sent mostly to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:9).
1. We should remember **there were twelve apostles and the seventies** actively spreading the Gospel throughout the known world.

- B. While fourteen of twenty-seven books contained in the New Testament were Paul's epistles, "... it may well be found, when God reveals [all things] ...that Peter and others of the early brethren traveled as widely and wrote as much as did Paul." (*The Life and Teachings of Jesus and His Apostles*, Institute Manual, p. 269).

IV.. Why we do not have the full Biblical record.

A. Our records, while marvelous, are woefully limited.

"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the whole world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25).

1. The early and persistent destruction of records is one cause of the lack of the full history of the apostles' works after Christ's departure.
2. The Romans tried to destroy Christianity by destroying their records.
Just as Christians from the outset had recognized that the scriptures were germane to the spiritual well-being of the Church, so also did their enemies. As opponents saw the spread of this new religion, they realized that its books were a key to its destruction. Therefore, as they persecuted and slew the leaders, they sought to destroy their scriptures. Waves of persecution and destruction of books, continued through the third century after Christ.
3. After Christianity became the dominant religion in the Roman Empire, treasure-troves of records were then burned by marauding barbarians (such as Vandals and Goths) and later also by northern sea marauders (such as the Vikings).
4. "The Dark Ages," [the first five centuries following Christ], got that name from the lack of historical records due to the many destructions of records.

While many records of early Christianity have been destroyed, gradually a fuller picture is being assembled. And some additional records now found show more of the spread of the Gospel to other lands.

Note: The following additional material is for interest only. It can be studied but is not recommended to be taught in Sunday School lessons.

It is material which I discovered when I served a mission in Ireland. While at first skeptical, I saw many, many evidences in Ireland which convinced me this is part of the fuller story. I cannot give here all the evidences that I found.

- I. There is an amazing amount of evidence from good sources that there were many in the British Isles, of Israelite stock, who were prepared to receive the Gospel shortly after Christ's death, beginning even in 37 A.D.
 - A. According to many reputable sources, the Gospel was taken to the British Isles by Christ's apostles and seventies.
 - B. Remember **Jesus commanded His apostles** to take His Gospel to every

- nation.** "Go ye therefore and teach **all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19).
- C. The British Isles were not least among the nations to whom the apostles took the Gospel. They were among the very first to be taken this great News.**
Evidence is that they were not the barbarians that Romans liked to portray them, but were a highly civilized people, with schools which Romans attended.
- E. **Eusebius** is one of many ancient historians recording that **the apostles** were true to the command of their Master, and went to Britain. "The apostles passed beyond the ocean to the isles called the British Isles." (Note the plural form of "apostles.")
- F. Sir Henry Spelman, a respected British scholar, writing in *Concilia*, "We have **abundant evidence** that this Britain of ours received the Faith, and that **from the disciples of Christ Himself** soon after the Crucifixion." (Emphasis added).
- G. Polydore Vergil, a Roman Catholic scholar, agreed. "Britain was of all kingdoms the first that received the Gospel."
- H. British historian, Gildas, told *when* the gospel came. "We certainly know that Christ, the True Sun, afforded his light, the knowledge of His precepts, to our Island in the last year of the reign of Tiberias Caesar, A.D. 37
- I. One ancient authority explained Paul didn't address Peter when he wrote to the Romans (See Romans 1:7), though that was the custom, because Peter had been banished with other Jews from Rome by Claudius and was in Britain. (Cornelius a Lapide, in *Argum epist. St. Paul ad Romanos*, Chap. XVI.)
- J. In Scotland, tradition is that the apostle Andrew brought the Gospel to them.
- K. Freculphus claims that in addition to apostles, other Christians came to the British Isles who were seeking refuge from the persecution by the Romans. He gave the date of their arrival as A.D. 37. John may have spoken of this flight for refuge when he wrote *Revelation 12:13-17 showing the Saints fleeing into the wilderness to escape the wrath of the serpent.*
- L. One King, Arviragus, gave these early Christian refugees in Britain a gift of land (designated as "twelve hides") upon which to build a church. The Domesday Survey of 1088 A.D. confirms this gift. "The Domus Dei, in the great monastery in Glastingbury, This Glastingbury Church possesses in its own villa XII hides of land which have never paid tax."
- M. A column of this church held a brass engraving plate. It states, "The first ground of God, the first ground of the Saints in Britain, the rise and foundation of all religion in Britain, the burial place of the Saints." (Spelman's *Concilia*, Vol I, 9).
- N. William of Malmesbury studied what he felt was a "mass of evidence" confirming the antiquity of a very early Christian church in Glastonbury. He said its antiquity was shown by its reference as 'Ealde Chirche.'" It was originally made of wattlework. Malmesbury, after surveying the evidence says, "This Church, then is certainly the oldest I am acquainted with in England, ... Moreover there are **documents of no small credit**, which have been discovered in certain places, to the following effect: **No other hands than those of the disciples of Christ erected the Church at Glastonbury...**" (Emphasis added).
- O. There exists other **archaeological proof for very early Christianity in the British Isles.** An ancient **excavated brass tablet** says another Christian chapel was built in the British Isles in **170 A.D.** by "Lucius, the first Christian King of

this land, then called Britains.

V. Christianity existed in the British Isles and independently from Rome for centuries.

A. The facts are that Christianity was accepted early in the British Isles on a wide-spread basis, while in Rome, the few Christians there were still being persecuted. Later, Rome finally accepted Christianity through a mandate by the Emperor Constantine, but Christianity in the British Isles remained independent. Both forms of Christianity existed side by side. Neither was dominant over the other. Furthermore, in the British Isles, **the same Christianity, having spread among the Druids, existed in both Ireland and Britain.** There was no distinction and no religious conflict. **And both Islands, without conflict, sent out missionaries to bring Christianity to the Continent, to places such as Gaul (France) and Switzerland.**

However, much later, these missionaries from the British Isles began to come in contact with missionaries from Roman Christianity on the Continent. British Isle and Roman missionaries found themselves seeking converts in the same areas.

At that point, the **Romans felt they needed to bring the Christians of the British Isles under their control.** Pope Gregory I sent forty monks, with a leader named Augustine, to Britain in 596 A.D. Eventually the Roman Church did bring British and Irish Christianity under its control, although there were struggles for centuries. (One source for this history is Jakob Streit, *Sun and Cross: From Megalithic Culture to Early Christianity in Ireland*. Floris Books, 1977.)

However, the Roman story, which has unfortunately been accepted by the world, is that it was this group in 596 who took Christianity to a pagan British Isles. And that St. Patrick took it to Ireland. Unfortunately, most people have just accepted these stories. **But they are not accurate histories.**

In fact, Patrick himself, who was a missionary in Ireland, said that Christianity was there before his arrival.

Due to the witness of the Book of Mormon, that the Savior had “other sheep” beyond the Nephites, it is likely that Jesus himself visited the Saints on the British Isles. And they, in fact, have traditions that this was so.

The truth is, there are also traditions of Jesus visiting other pockets of his sheep in the Meridian of Time in such places as Russia, China and the Philippines.

These oral histories tell us that God so loved the World, that He saw that His Gospel was preached throughout the world in the Meridian of Time, just as He came Himself to the Americas and taught it to His people in the Western Hemisphere.

For as he said to His disciples, the Gospel was meant to go to the “uttermost parts of the earth.”