

D&C Lesson 21:

“LOOKING FORTH FOR THE GREAT DAY OF THE LORD TO COME”

by Ted L. Gibbons

INTRODUCTION: A Chicago editor bragged that he could edit the entire New Testament into one paragraph. This is his offering: “He was born. He lived. He died. He’s coming back, and he’s not very happy.” Of course he is coming back, and how ever far away that remarkable day might be, it closer now than it was yesterday. The purpose of this lesson is to give some instruction in recognizing the signs of his coming, and to give encouragement about being prepared when it happens, for, as Elder Maxwell said,

And, if you sense that one day every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, why not do so now? For in the coming of that collective confession, it will mean much less to kneel down when it is no longer possible to stand up! (Neal A. Maxwell, “Why Not Now?” Ensign, Nov. 1974, 13)

If we learn to kneel now, it will be much easier and more enjoyable then.

1. THE SAVIOR WILL RETURN TO THE EARTH IN POWER AND GREAT GLORY.

Powerful men and women have walked the earth, people who have by the domination of their personalities and, not infrequently, by the strength of their armies, changed the way the planet functions. You know many of the names: Isaiah and Jeremiah and Moses and Hitler and Genghis Kahn. Joan of Arc, Eleanor Roosevelt, Eve and Emma. But there has never been a Being on this planet who will change the way this planet is operated like the Being who will appear at the Second Coming. Consider some of the scriptural descriptions of his coming and his impact on the affairs of this world. I think you will be amazed as I have been and how much information the *Doctrine and Covenants* gives about the events associated with the Second Coming of the Lord. By the way, even though this list is long, it is by no means comprehensive.

- T The proud and wicked will be as stubble (D&C 29:9)
- T Christ will be revealed with power and great glory (D&C 29:11)
- T The wicked shall not stand (D&C 29:11)
- T Christ will come in a pillar of fire (D&C 29:12)
- T All the earth shall quake (D&C 29:13)
- T The righteous dead will come forth (D&C 29:13)

- T Christ will come in a cloud with power and glory (D&C 34:7)
- T All nations shall tremble (D&C 34:8)
- T The righteous will abide the day and be purified (D&C 35:21)
- T People will see Christ and know that he is (D&C 38:8)
- T He that is not purified will not abide the day (D&C 38:8)
- T Christ will come in the clouds of heaven clothed with power and great glory (D&C 45:44)
- T The saints will come forth and meet Christ in the cloud (D&C 45:45)
- T The arm of the Lord will fall upon the nations (D&C 45:47)
- T The Mount of Olives will divide and the earth will tremble and the heavens will shake (45:48)
- T All the ends of the earth will hear the voice of the Lord (D&C 45:49)
- T The Jews will recognize Christ as their Messiah (D&C 45:51-53)
- T The heathen nations will be redeemed and have part in the first resurrection (D&C 45:51)
- T Christ will consume the wicked with unquenchable fire (D&C 63:34)
- T Christ will bring the just with him when he comes to reign (D&C 76:63)
- T There will be a great sign in heaven and all people will see it together (D&C 88:93—see also Matthew 24:30)
- T The great and abominable church will be destroyed (D&C 88:94)
- T The face of the Lord will be unveiled (D&C 88:95)
- T Every knee will bow, every tongue confess (D&C 88:104)
- T All flesh shall see Christ together (D&C 101:23)
- T Every corruptible thing shall be consumed (D&C 101:24)
- T Elements will melt with a fervent heat (D&C 101:24)
- T All things will become new (D&C 101:26)
- T The enmity of all flesh will cease (D&C 101:26)
- T The Lord will reveal all things (D&C 101:32-34)
- T The Lord will stand in the midst of his people and reign over all flesh (D&C 133:25)
- T So great will be his glory that the sun will hide its face and the moon will withhold its light and the stars will be hurled down (D&C 133:49)

2. THE MILLENNIUM WILL BE A TIME OF JOY AND PEACE

There is an insight in D&C 133 about the Second Coming that we must not miss. It is a precious morsel of truth that has caused me wonder and awe for many years. My attention was drawn to it by Elder Maxwell:

What will we and those who witness these marvelous events speak of, then and later? Not the solar display with falling stars! Instead, we will speak of Jesus' "loving-kindness." For how long will we so exclaim? "Forever and ever" (D&C 133:52). The more we come to know of Jesus and the Atonement, the more we

shall praise and adore Him "forever and ever." (Neal A. Maxwell, *That Ye May Believe*)

Think of the significance of this prophecy from D&C 133. Those who abide the day of his coming will have witnessed cataclysmic events the likes of which this world has never seen. A rather severe earthquake caught me in the bathtub early one morning when I was about 16. Walls cracked. Shelves emptied on my head. Brothers and sisters ran screaming from the house (I stayed put!). All we talked about for two days was the earthquake and its impact on our community. But when Christ comes in his glory and power, we will not meet to discuss the destruction of the wicked nor the great earthquakes and "solar displays." We will not dwell on the consumption of corruptible things nor on the resurrection of the righteous nor on the end of enmity on the planet. Survivors will talk about

. . . the loving kindness of their Lord, and all that he has bestowed upon them according to his goodness, and according to his loving kindness, forever and ever.

In all their afflictions he was afflicted. And the angel of his presence saved them; and in his love, and in his pity, he redeemed them, and bore them, and carried them all the days of old . . . (D&C 133:52,53)

We know from the revelations and prophetic declarations that life on the earth will undergo some profound changes when the Lord comes. Consider some of the following passages. As you read and ponder, ask yourself this question: *What price am I willing to pay to live in such a world?*

- T Wickedness will disappear from the earth (D&C 29:9)
- T We will live by Christ's laws when he comes (D&C 38:22)
- T Children will grow up without sin to salvation (D&C 45:58)
- T The Son of Man will come down from heaven to meet the Kingdom of God on the earth (D&C 65:5)
- T The dead will rise and receive an inheritance in the holy city (D&C 63:49)
- T Living saints will be caught up to meet Christ (D&C 88:96)
- T The Saints will be glorified and receive their inheritance with Christ and be made equal with him (D&C 88:107)
- T Whatever anyone asks will be given him (D&C 101:27)
- T Satan will not have power to tempt any man (D&C 101:28)
- T There will be no sorrow because of death (D&C 101:29)
- T There will be no new graves (D&C 101:30-31)
- T There will be no infant mortality (D&C 101:30)

Do you remember the movies and TV shows you watched when you were younger.? You knew before the shows began how they would end. You knew that the good guys would win. The Lone Ranger would not be killed by the outlaws. The Cisco Kid would capture the bandits. John Wayne would come out on top regardless of the opposition of his enemies.

We also know how the world will end. There is no mystery about the final outcome. *In the end, the good guys win.* There may be some times when it looks, even when it *feels*, like the bad guys are having things their own way all the time. But when the show is over, when the seventh seal is opened and the Creator comes to dwell on his creation, the good people, the righteous people, the just people, will abide the day and rejoice in his companionship. The only mystery is an intensely personal one: Where will we be when it happens?

3. WE MUST PREPARE FOR THE SECOND COMING.

A few years ago an organization called *Jews for Jesus* published a full-page color ad in *Time Magazine* depicting the event described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17 (and also in D&C 88:97) when Christ will come and the righteous will be caught up to meet him in the air. Paul wrote of this event with these words:

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: Then 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. (1 Thess. 4:16,17)

If you are standing in the park one day with your family, and suddenly they begin to float upward, and you're still stuck to the ground, *grab someone's leg and hold on!* The great lesson is of course that we must not wait till he comes to get to know him and to follow him. We must do it now. It seems clear that those who believed in Christ and followed him when he came to earth the first time were those who believed in him and followed him before he was born in Bethlehem. They recognized his body because they were intimately acquainted with his Spirit. Will this not also be true of the Second Coming? If you want to live a Christlike life of love and joy and peace and righteousness during the Millennium, don't wait till he comes to get started.

Preparation for the Second Coming will require effort and devotion. We have been given frequent scriptural and prophetic instructions about how to prepare.

First, we must *Watch*. "Watch, therefore, that ye may be ready." (D&C 50:46)
"Gird up your loins and be watchful and be sober, looking forth for the coming of the Son of Man,

for he cometh in an hour you think not." (D&C 61:38) "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour." (D&C 133:11)

Watch for what? For the predicted signs.

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. (D&C 45:39)

Under the heading **Jesus Christ, Second Coming of** in the Topical Guide and the Index to the Triple Combination, you will find scriptural references for many of the signs that will precede the Second Coming. It is imperative that we are familiar with those signs and that we understand their significance. Joseph Smith warned that there will be those so spiritually insensitive that they will be unable to discern the most dramatic of signs announcing the arrival of the Lord.

There will be wars and rumors of wars, signs in the heavens above and on the earth beneath, the sun turned into darkness and the moon to blood, earthquakes in divers places, the seas heaving beyond their bounds; then will appear one grand sign of the Son of Man in heaven. *But what will the world do? They will say it is a planet, a comet, etc.* But the Son of Man will come as the sign of the coming of the Son of Man, which will be as the light of the morning cometh out of the east. (D. H. C. April 6, 1843. "Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith." pp. 286-7, *emphasis added.*)

We must also stand in holy places. In D&C 18:6, the Lord warned that "the world is ripening in iniquity." If that was true in 1829, what would the Lord say of the world in our own day? Listen to the language of his warnings:

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Matt. 26:41)

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. (1 Cor. 16:13)

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. (1 Thess. 5:6)

Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye must watch and pray always, lest ye be tempted by the devil, and ye be led away captive by him. (3 Nephi 18:15)

Therefore, what I say unto one I say unto all: Watch, for the adversary spreadeth

his dominions, and darkness reigneth . . . (D&C 82:5)

Since we know that a time in coming, either in life or in death, when we must give an accounting of our lives and our works, and since either of those events might come like a thief in the night (see D&C 45:19), we must watch constantly and be prepared in righteousness for our meeting with the Lord (2 Nephi 9:41).

Where are the *holy places* in which we must stand? 2 Nephi 14, 5,6 suggests three of them: (1) our dwelling places. If our homes are not holy places—if we invite iniquity in through the mail or the TV or the radio or the stereo or our own conduct—we must do something about it. (2) The assemblies of Zion: the wards and stakes and seminaries and institutes: any places where the saints gather together to enjoy the fellowship of the righteous. (3) The temples (tabernacles), which shall provide shade from the heat (the fiery darts of the adversary: 1 Nephi 15:24), a place of refuge, and a covering from the storms of life.

And when we must depart from the holy places to interact with the world (and all of us must do this almost daily) then we must take the Holy Spirit as our guide, to stand with us.

And at that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins. 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. (D&C 45:56, 57)

I am confident that if our lives pass frequently through the holy places, and if the Holy Spirit accompanies us to other places, then our ability to be prepared will be enhanced. But if our homes are not holy, if we neglect church meetings and don't get to the temple, if we live in such a way that we forfeit the companionship of the Spirit, we are in great danger of being engulfed in the iniquity about us.

CONCLUSION: Christ will come again. The descriptions above of the events associated with that coming suggest in fact that he may not be very happy with the world in general. But if we are prepared and waiting and watching, he will be happy with us. The following comes from the dedicatory prayer of the Ogden Temple:

And it is our desire to be instruments in thy hands to prepare a people for the coming of thy Son; for the day when every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; for the day when the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and he shall stand again on earth; for the day when thy saints shall be redeemed, and "shall mention the loving kindness of their Lord, and all that he

has bestowed upon them according to his goodness, and according to his loving kindness, forever and ever."

O, our Father, we long for the day when the Prince of Peace shall come, when the earth shall rest and righteousness be found again upon her face; and it is our prayer, spoken out of humble and contrite hearts, that we shall abide the day and be found worthy to live with him whom thou hast appointed to stand as King of kings and Lord of lords, to whom be glory and honor and power and might both now and forever. (Ensign, Mar. 1972, p. 11)

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