

O.T. LESSON #1
“THIS IS MY WORK AND MY GLORY”
by Ted L. Gibbons

Author’s Note: The Old Testament is a volume for the ages. For more than 4000 years, the books that it contains comprised the only scriptural witness of Christ, the atonement, and the work and glory of the Father and the Son.

It is filled and bursting with lessons for life, showing us from the beginning to the end both the folly and the decency of men, and the undeviating goodness of God. In the book we see the children of God at their very best and at their very worst, we see prophets and prodigals, watchmen and witnesses, infidels and apostates, spectacular kings and fallen kings, children of promise and power, and women of unsurpassed grace and holiness.

I am aware (in part because the hundreds of emails that have come to me in the past two weeks) that many of you feel some trepidation about teaching this book. Of all the scriptural texts, it is the least studied, and perhaps the least appreciated. But let me assure you that that very condition will be a blessing to you. There are, truthfully, hundreds of stories and lessons in this great book that nearly everyone will find unfamiliar. It’s very obscurity provides a wonderful opportunity for teachers and for students to learn lessons in unexpected places and ways.

You will have at least four sources for understanding this book this year. The first and most important will be the book itself. Decide now, whether or not you have ever done it before, to read it this year—all of it: every page, every chapter, every verse. The second will be the whisperings of the Holy Spirit as you study. If you can find a way to combine the first (the scriptures) with the second (the Spirit), you will have experiences with the Old Testament that will enrich your life a thousand times. The third is the Sunday School class taught in your ward or branch. The lessons given there will be drawn from a manual prepared by church members called and set apart to that work, a manual reviewed, corrected, and approved by members of the correlation committee, the Quorum of the Twelve, and other General Authorities. The fourth will be extraneous sources, including these cyberspace Sunday School lessons.

Do not get the sequence wrong! If you must choose between these lessons and the ones taught in your Sunday School, turn off your computer and go to Church! And for heaven's sake do not let these lessons take the place of your personal study of the scriptures! I intend to immerse the paragraphs of these lessons in scriptural fountains, but they will not take the place of the pure and undiluted words of the prophets. As David wrote, "The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." (Psalm 12:6) I could never make a claim like that.

Feel free at any time to email suggestions and concerns. I will try to respond quickly and appropriately. My email is <tedgibbons@yahoo.com>.

With those cautions and invitations, let us begin.

INTRODUCTION: I always commence teaching the Old Testament in the same way. I bring in a box of odds and ends and place them on my desk. I ask for two volunteers, and when they come to the front, I show them the box, tell them they have two minutes, and sit down. The responses vary. Nearly all ask what they are supposed to do. I never respond. Some then stand and wait, others begin to remove items from the box and make an attempt to build something—anything—with the materials that are there.

After two minutes, I invite the builders to sit and then ask them to describe their experience. Without exception they speak of the difficulty of proceeding effectively without knowing precisely what they are to do.

Sometimes, at this point, I show on overhead transparencies the rules for various parlor games. Near the beginning of almost every set of rules can be found a section called something like **Object of the Game**, wherein the manufacturer and designer of the game tell the players what they are trying to accomplish.

And then, finally this question: "What is missing from the Old Testament?" By now the answer is obvious. Without Moses I, participants in mortality begin to study and participate in the work of God without knowing what they are trying to accomplish. How grateful we should be for the Joseph Smith Translation, and particularly for the wonderful work done by that translation in the early chapters of Genesis.

I wonder if there is any chapter in the Bible more damaging to Lucifer's work and his image than Moses 1. I do not know how he managed to delete it from the front of the Bible, but I think I know why he wanted to. Actually, his work in corrupting our understanding of what life is about, and what Satan is about must have received a great stimulus when the content of Moses 1 disappeared from the Bible.

Nephi, in 1 Nephi 13 speaks of the loss of plain and precious things from the Bible. As an aid in understanding the damage done by that loss to our understanding of the work and Glory of God, consider the following facts:

1. In the book of Moses there are 268 references to the Savior and his mission. In the corresponding chapters of Genesis, there are 36.
2. The first reference to "the Only Begotten" in the King James Version of the Bible is found in John 1:14. In the Joseph Smith Translation it is found in Moses 1:6.
3. The first reference to "Satan" in the KJV is in 1 Chronicles 21:1. In the JST it is in Moses 1:12.
4. The first reference to the "devil" in the KJV is in Matthew 4:1. In the JST it is in Moses 4:4

Moses 1 is the Lord's preface (see D&C 1:6) to the Old Testament, and in it the Lord tells us what his work—the object of mortality—really is.

1. GOD TEACHES THAT MOSES IS A SON OF GOD.

Nephi wrote that because of the loss of plain and precious things, "an exceedingly great many do stumble . . ." and "Satan hath great power . . ." (1 Nephi 13:29)

In Moses 1:1, 6, and 7, what identity does the Lord call Moses? Can you see the significance of beginning the sacred record with such an announcement? Read the first 6 verses of Moses 1 and underline all the truths God tells Moses and us about himself.

Moses saw the work of God as it related to the planet earth:

And it came to pass that Moses looked, and beheld the world upon which he was created; and Moses beheld the world and the ends thereof, and all the children of men which are, and

which were created; of the same he greatly marveled and wondered. (Moses 1:8)

In spite of the revelation of God's greatness and his own sonship, after Moses had beheld the extent of God's work in this world, he was overwhelmed. His participation in the royal family of Egypt (one of the great world powers) notwithstanding, Moses seemed to recognize something unexpected about mankind.

. . . and he said unto himself: Now, for this cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed. (Moses 1:11)

2. SATAN CONFRONTS MOSES; MOSES CASTS HIM OUT.

Satan, who wanted to be worshiped and sought the honor, glory, and power of God in the councils of heaven (see Moses 4:1-3), now appeared to Moses and tried again. "Moses, son of man, worship me." (Moses 1:12)

Satan has been trying from the beginning to discredit the notion that we are sons and daughters of God. Here he refers to Moses as a "son of man." If men can be convinced that they are nothing more than the delightful result of a fortuitous combination of amino acids and seawater and 37 billion years of evolution, what does that do to further the work of Satan?

What was missing from this experience that revealed to Moses that Satan was less than he claimed to be?

And it came to pass that Moses looked upon Satan and said: Who art thou? For behold, I am a son of God, in the similitude of his Only Begotten; and where is thy glory, that I should worship thee? For behold, I could not look upon God, except his glory should come upon me, and I were transfigured before him. But I can look upon thee in the natural man. Is it not so, surely? (Moses 1:13,14)

Read Moses 1:9-20 and see how many times the word "glory" appears. Satan had none. This being who wanted to claim the glory of God ended up with no glory in a kingdom of no glory (see D&C 88:24). Perhaps this is a part of what Moses perceived when he saw "the bitterness of hell." (Moses

1:20)

What do we need to learn from the fact that Moses commanded Satan to depart three different times? (Moses 1:16,18,20,21)

And do not miss this insight. It is not the Savior who throws a temper tantrum when we do not worship him. It is Satan. Look at other words that describe the bitterness of Hell:

(1:19) “cried with a loud voice”

(1:19) “ranted upon the earth”

(1:21) “Satan began to tremble”

(1:22) “weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth”

I suspect these verses constituted an added incentive to Lucifer to remove this account from the Scriptures.

3. GOD APPEARS AGAIN AND TEACHES MOSES OF HIS WORK AND GLORY.

When the Lord returned to teach Moses again, after the departure of Lucifer, he did an unexpected thing. He showed Moses the same things he showed him before. He called Moses again to be the deliverer of his people (Moses 1:25,26), and then showed him the earth and her inhabitants a second time.

And it came to pass, as the voice was still speaking, Moses cast his eyes and beheld the earth, yea, even all of it; and there was not a particle of it which he did not behold, discerning it by the spirit of God. And he beheld also the inhabitants thereof, and there was not a soul which he beheld not; and he discerned them by the Spirit of God; and their numbers were great, even numberless as the sand upon the sea shore. And he beheld many lands; and each land was called earth, and there were inhabitants on the face thereof. (Moses 1:27-29)

I know there is power in repetition, but I have long felt that there is an often overlooked reason for this second presentation of this information. The first time Moses saw the earth and her inhabitants, he failed to understand their significance in the context of his relationship with God. It is true that in comparison with God, men are nothing, but I am pretty sure that is not what

the Lord intended to teach. When I give a test and everybody in the class misses a particular question, my inclination is to teach the principle again. It seems possible that that is what the Lord is doing here.

At least we know this: God returned and showed Moses what he had seen before (in Moses 1:8), the very things that had convinced Moses of his own nothingness, and then added this postscript:

And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten. (Moses 1:33)

Moses had questions about God's "own purposes." He asked the Lord to tell him why and how he had created the earth.

And it came to pass that Moses called upon God, saying: Tell me, I pray thee, *why* these things are so, and *by what* thou madest them? (Moses 1:30, emphasis added)

To the question of how ("by what") these things were made, the Lord seems to defer. "For mine own purpose have I made these things. Here is wisdom and it remaineth in me." (Moses 1:31)

But the Lord explains very clearly why he made them. All of them: this world, and other worlds without number. The Lord said "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." (Moses 1:39)

When I read these words I think I hear the Father saying, "Moses, it is not true that man is nothing. He is the underlying and overriding purpose of all of my work. His success constitutes my glory. *Man is everything!*"

CONCLUSION: Lorenzo Snow captured the overriding message of Moses one in a famous couplet often repeated in the Church. "As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may be."

His sister, Eliza R. Snow related the circumstances in this way:

"Being present at a 'Blessing Meeting,' in the Temple, previous

to his baptism into the Church; after listening to several patriarchal blessings pronounced upon the heads of different individuals with whose history he [Lorenzo Snow] was acquainted, and of whom he knew the Patriarch was entirely ignorant; he was struck with astonishment to hear the peculiarities of those persons positively and plainly referred to in their blessings. And, as he afterwards expressed, he was convinced that an influence, superior to human prescience, dictated the words of the one who officiated.

“The Patriarch was the father of Joseph, the Prophet. That was the first time Lorenzo had met him. After the services, they were introduced, and Father Smith said to my brother that he would soon be convinced of the truth of the latter-day work, and be baptized; and he said: ‘You will become as great as you can possibly wish—EVEN AS GREAT AS GOD, and you cannot wish to be greater.’” (Eliza R. Snow, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*, Salt Lake City: Deseret News Co., 1884, pp. 9–10.)

Lorenzo Snow was baptized a short time later and began his service in the Church. In the spring of 1840 he was called to serve a mission in the British Isles. Before his departure he was in the home of a Church member who was preaching a sermon on the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. (See Matt. 20:1–16.) According to Elder Snow, “While attentively listening to his explanation, the Spirit of the Lord rested mightily upon me—the eyes of my understanding were opened, and I saw as clear as the sun at noonday, with wonder and astonishment, the pathway of God and man. I formed the following couplet which expresses the revelation, as it was shown me, and explains Father Smith’s dark saying to me at a blessing meeting in the Kirtland Temple, prior to my baptism....

“As man now is, God once was:”

“As God now is, man may be.”

“I felt this to be a sacred communication, which I related to no

one except my sister Eliza, until I reached England, when in a confidential private conversation with President Brigham Young, in Manchester, I related to him this extraordinary manifestation.” (Eliza R. Snow, pp. 46–47; italics added. Brigham Young was President of the Quorum of the Twelve at the time.)

President Snow’s son LeRoi later told that the Prophet Joseph Smith confirmed the validity of the revelation Elder Snow had received: “Soon after his return from England, in January, 1843, Lorenzo Snow related to the Prophet Joseph Smith his experience in Elder Sherwood’s home. This was in a confidential interview in Nauvoo. The Prophet’s reply was: ‘Brother Snow, that is a true gospel doctrine, and it is a revelation from God to you.’” (LeRoi C. Snow, *Improvement Era*, June 1919, p. 656.) (Gerald N. Lund, “I Have a Question,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1982, 39,40)

Copyright © 2002 by Ted Gibbons <tedgibbons@yahoo.com>. All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in any form or by any means for commercial gain without the express written consent of the author. Digital or printed copies may be freely made and distributed for personal and public non-commercial use.