

OT LESSON 35

GOD REVEALS HIS SECRETS TO HIS SERVANTS THE PROPHETS

by Ted L. Gibbons

INTRODUCTION: I spoke to my institute students last week about following the prophet. All of them are stalwart. They love Pres. Hinckley and they love to hear him speak. But there is an element to believing the prophets that is often lacking. To illustrate that element I asked the students to turn to Ezekiel 33:30-33.

Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against (better: *about*) thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, *but they will not do them*: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, *but they do them not* (emphasis added).

I told these wonderful young people how exciting it was for me to gather my family in my living room each April and October to hear the words of the Prophet. When they dim the lights in the Conference Center and the camera shows a close-up, is very much as though the Prophet is in my house speaking to my family. We always plan for these meetings. We try to get up early and eat and gather in time to attend to every word. We are like the people in Ezekiel's day. "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words." We come and we sit and we hear. But . . . (and this is the question that matters with regard to prophets) do we do anything about it?

Can you think of something in your life that is different because of words spoken by the prophets in April? I once asked this question in a Gospel Doctrine class of 45 adults. Only one hand went up. This attitude of coming and sitting and listening but not acting probably defines the meaning of the

final verse quoted above: “And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, *but they do them not.*”

1. AMOS TEACHES THAT THE LORD REVEALS HIS SECRETS TO HIS SERVANTS THE PROPHETS.

Some things are so obvious that they need so correlating proof or explanation. Amos give some interesting examples from his own time and culture.

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3)

“Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey?” (Amos 3:4)

“Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?” (Amos 3:4)

“Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin [bait, lure] is for him? (Amos 3:5)

“Shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all?” (Amos 3:5)

“Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid?” (Amos 3:6)

“Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not known it?” (JST, Amos 3:6)

Will the Lord do anything until he reveals it to his prophets? (JST, Amos 3:7)

We require a living tree—a living fountain—living intelligence, proceeding from the living priesthood in heaven, through the living priesthood on earth.... And from the time that Adam first received a communication from God, to the time that John, on the Isle of Patmos, received his communication, or Joseph Smith had the heavens opened to him, it always required new revelations, adapted to the peculiar circumstances in which the churches or individuals were placed. Adam's revelation did not instruct Noah to build his ark; nor did Noah's revelation tell Lot to forsake Sodom; nor did either of these speak of the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt. These all had revelations for themselves, and so had Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Jesus, Peter,

Paul, John, and Joseph, And so must we, or we shall make a shipwreck (John Taylor, The Gospel Kingdom, p.34).

On the day the Church was organized, the Lord gave a revelation to the Church about the living prophet. It was a revelation designed to prevent us from making a “shipwreck.”

Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me; For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith. For by doing these things *the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name's glory* (D&C 21:4-6, emphasis added).

What 3 promises did the Lord make in the verses above if we would heed the words of prophets as though they were the words of the Lord? Ponder the implications of these promises and reflect on the times when they have been fulfilled in your own life. In my own family in recent months we have sensed the heavens shaking for our good as we have tried to follow the prophet more closely.

2. AMOS PROPHECIES OF ANCIENT AND LATTER-DAY ISRAEL.

What did Amos see in vision in Amos 7:7,8?

Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand. And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more . . .

The purpose of a plumbline is to insure that the walls are perfectly straight and upright. When God sets one in the midst of his people, what is he looking for? Perhaps the following verses from Benjamin can help us understand.

But, O my people, beware lest there shall arise contentions among you, and ye list to obey the evil spirit, which was spoken of by my father Mosiah. For behold, there is a wo pronounced upon him who listeth to obey that spirit; for if he listeth to obey him, and remaineth and dieth in his sins, the same drinketh damnation to his own soul; for he receiveth for his wages an everlasting punishment, having transgressed the law of God contrary to his own knowledge (Mosiah 2:32,33)

I looked up the word *list* in my dictionary and found this: “**List:** to lean, or to incline to one side or the other.” A plumbline would demonstrate clearly is someone was listing or leaning or inclining. And such an attitude can be dangerous.

I say unto you, that the man that doeth this, the same cometh out in open rebellion against God; therefore he listeth to obey the evil spirit, and becometh an enemy to all righteousness; therefore, the Lord has no place in him, for he dwelleth not in unholy temples (Mosiah 2:37).

What evidence is there in Amos 7:10-17 that Israel is *listing*? Can you imagine leaders in Salt Lake asking President Hinckley to go somewhere else to teach and preach?

What does the Lord reveal to Amos that he plans to do about this state of affairs?

Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit. And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.

This is fruit that has been picked. It was picked because it was ripe. To use the words of the Book of Mormon, it was “fully ripe”(see 2 Nephi 28:16; Mosiah 12:12; Alma 37:28; Alma 37:31; Alma 45:16, etc.). Thus the Lord says to Amos, “I will not again pass by them any more.” This time, he will pick the fruit. Read Amos 8:3-8 and reflect on the judgements that are coming upon Israel.

What does the Lord say will come upon Israel? A famine.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it (Amos 8:11-12).

You know what happens when you go without physical food. How do you feel when you do not (or cannot) partake of the word of the Lord for a while? If you had to choose an eating verb to describe your relationship with the scriptures and the words of the living prophets, what verb would you use? Feast, meal, snack, nibble, anorexia? How about "famine?" There is no famine for the word now. We have no need to wander from sea to sea nor from the north to the east, to run to and fro. It is as close as our bookshelves and (at least twice a year) our TV sets. Are any still experiencing a famine?

3. JOEL PROPHECIES THAT GOD WILL BLESS HIS PEOPLE IN THE LATTER DAYS AND POUR OUT HIS SPIRIT ON THEM

The major message of Joel seems to be that the day of the Lord is coming.

Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. (Joel 1:15)

But, and the prophet Joel is perfectly clear about this, that day will be preceded by war. You may remember that Isaiah spoke of a time when men would

beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more (Isaiah 2:4).

What does Joel say they will do?

Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong (Joel 3:10).

Joel describes that day in these words:

Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them (Joel 2:1-3)

In chapter 1 Joel compares the “invading or conquering armies to four varieties (or stages of growth) of locusts.” (See footnote 4a in Joel 1).

The war is described in Joel 1:4-6; Joel 1:30-31; Joel 2:2-11. The reason for this destruction is much like the reasons reviewed in Amos above. The fruit of the vineyard is bad.

The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished. The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men (Joel 1:10-13).

But the Lord makes wonderful promises to the righteous.

1. Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and repent, o the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and he will turn away the evil from you (JST, Joel 2:12,13).
2. Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders,

gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet (Joel 2:16).

3. Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength. Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month (Joel 2:21-13).
4. And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit (Joel 2:28,29).
5. The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim. Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion (Joel 3:16-21).

CONCLUSION: The language of Joel and the promises of Amos remind me of the words of Nephi.

Wherefore, he will preserve the righteous by his power, even if it so be that the fulness of his wrath must come, and the righteous

be preserved, even unto the destruction of their enemies by fire. Wherefore, the righteous need not fear; for thus saith the prophet, they shall be saved, even if it so be as by fire.

Behold, my brethren, I say unto you, that these things must shortly come; yea, even blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke must come; and it must needs be upon the face of this earth; and it cometh unto men according to the flesh if it so be that they will harden their hearts against the Holy One of Israel.

For behold, the righteous shall not perish; for the time surely must come that all they who fight against Zion shall be cut off.

And the Lord will surely prepare a way for his people, unto the fulfilling of the words of Moses, which he spake, saying: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that all those who will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among the people.

And now I, Nephi, declare unto you, that this prophet of whom Moses spake was the Holy One of Israel; wherefore, he shall execute judgment in righteousness.

And the righteous need not fear, for they are those who shall not be confounded. But it is the kingdom of the devil, which shall be built up among the children of men, which kingdom is established among them which are in the flesh—

For the time speedily shall come that all churches which are built up to get gain, and all those who are built up to get power over the flesh, and those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world, and to do all manner of iniquity; yea, in fine, all those who belong to the kingdom of the devil are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake; they are those who must be brought low in the dust; they are those who must be consumed as stubble; and this is according to the words of the prophet.

And the time cometh speedily that the righteous must be led up as calves of the stall, and the Holy One of Israel must reign in dominion, and might, and power, and great glory (1 Nephi 22:17-24).

If we obey the words of the Lord as they come to us through our prophets and the scriptures and the Holy Spirit, and if we sanctify our lives and devote ourselves to service—if we walk uprightly before the lord, leaning neither to the right hand nor to the left, then we will be as safe as calves being led to the stall, where we can be protected from all the myriad dangers of the gathering darkness that will precede the coming of the Son of God.

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