

OT LESSON #48
**“THE GREAT AND DREADFUL DAY OF THE
LORD”**

Zechariah 10-14; Malachi
by Ted L. Gibbons

AUTHOR’S NOTE: With this lesson we come to the end of the Old Testament Manual. A time or two we have strapped on the aqua lung and gone deep, but most of the time we have floated serenely on the surface of this marvelous reservoir of knowledge and experience and power. Forty-eight lessons are hardly enough time and space to do justice to a book of this depth and complexity. I hope you will not assume that you have now studied the Old Testament. You have studied the parts of the Old Testament that the Gospel Doctrine Manual emphasizes, and (in these lessons) the brief segments of this book that I have highlighted. And even in those chapters, verses, and passages that were a part of these lessons, we cannot be said to have examined the record, but only to have examined a word or two, a phrase, and idea and an application. The Old Testament book is worth revisiting many times in your life, with hearts opened and prepared to receive the lessons the Lord has taught us there.

INTRODUCTION: I am now going to tell you the day of the Second Coming. You probably thought no one knew, but the Doctrine and Covenants is quite clear on the matter.

Behold, now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man, and verily it is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people; for he that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming (D&C 64:23).

“Now it is called today” and will be until the Son of Man comes.

For after today cometh the burning--this is speaking after the manner of the Lord--for verily I say, tomorrow all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up, for I am the Lord of Hosts; and I will not spare any that remain in Babylon (D&C 64:24).

The Second Coming—the day of burning—comes after today. It comes *tomorrow!* What could be clearer? Of course, this is “speaking after the manner of the Lord.” And “One day in Kolob is equal to a thousand years according to the measurement of this earth . . .” (Book of Abraham, Facsimile 2, figure 1).

D&C 77: tells us that the temporal existence of the earth is seven thousand years, or one week of God’s time.

Q. What are we to understand by the book which John saw, which was sealed on the back with seven seals?

A. We are to understand that it contains the revealed will, mysteries, and the works of God; the hidden things of his economy concerning this earth during the seven thousand years of its continuance, or its temporal existence.

Q. What are we to understand by the seven seals with which it was sealed?

A. We are to understand that the first seal contains the things of the first thousand years, and the second also of the second thousand years, and so on until the seventh (D&C 77:6,7).

We thus reckon that we are living somewhere near the end of the six thousandth year, which is called *today*, and that the Lord will return after the opening of the seventh seal, which will be *tomorrow*, and which, according to the manner or reckoning of the Lord, will be the seventh day or the beginning of the seven thousandth year.

1. ZECHARIAH AND MALACHI PROPHECY OF MANY EVENTS IN THE LAST DAYS.

Zechariah speaks of a day when Joseph will be strengthened (10:6), and Ephraim will be mighty (10:7), a day when the heart of Ephraim “shall rejoice in the Lord” (10:7). He talks of a gathering from the “far countries” (10:9), and of families “with their children” that will repent and come to the Lord (10:9). Surely we are seeing, indeed, are a part of, that gathering.

Zechariah and other Old Testament prophets also speak of a great war to be fought in and around Jerusalem. Ezekiel speaks of the attacking army as a “great company” (38:4), and says they will be like “a cloud to cover the

land” (39:9,16). They will be “a great company, and a mighty army” (38:15) John, in the book of Revelation, actually describes this soldiers of this army with a number which he *heard*.

And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them (Revelation 9:16)

In digits, that number is 200,000,000, which is by any reckoning, a pretty large collection of troops.

Zechariah describes the time of this battle with these words:

Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it (Zech. 12:2,3).

For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city (Zech. 14:2).

But the Lord will defend his people

in that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem (Zech. 12:8,9).

Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle (Zech. 14:3).

The nature of this divine defense will include, according to Ezekiel, both

earthquakes (a great shaking: 38:19), and great hailstones, with fire, rain, and brimstone (38:22).

Once again we find in the book of Revelation what seems to be a more detailed description of this earthquake.

And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath (Rev. 16:18,19).

We also find a most interesting note about the hailstones.

And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great (Rev. 16:21)

Hailstones of a talent? According to the Bible Dictionary (page 789), a talent weights 75.6 pounds. If one of those whacked you on the noggin, it could ruin your whole day. It could ruin a lot of days.

One of the effects of the earthquake seems to be included in the writings of Zechariah.

And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south (14:4)

The Jews, who will have been sorely pressed in the siege of Jerusalem, will flee into this new valley in the Mount of Olives.

And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of

the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee (Zech. 14:5).

The Doctrine and Covenants tells us this:

Then shall the arm of the Lord fall upon the nations. And then shall the Lord set his foot upon this mount, and it shall cleave in twain, and the earth shall tremble, and reel to and fro, and the heavens also shall shake (D&C 45:47,48).

As the remnant of the Jews flees into the valley in the Mount of Olives, they will meet there the Messiah for whom they have waited for so long—the great military deliverer who will destroy their enemies and set them free from bondage. But as they fall before him to worship and welcome him, they will see the wounds in his hands and feet.

. . . and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn . . . And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends (Zech 12:10; 13:6).

An account of this same event in the D&C is more direct.

And then shall the Jews look upon me and say: What are these wounds in thine hands and in thy feet? Then shall they know that I am the Lord; for I will say unto them: These wounds are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. I am he who was lifted up. I am Jesus that was crucified. I am the Son of God. And then shall they weep because of their iniquities; then shall they lament because they persecuted their king (D&C 45:51-53).

At his coming, the wicked will be destroyed.

And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all

the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour (Zech. 14:12,13).

Ezekiel describes the destruction of the wicked and the aftermath thereof in some detail in Ezekiel 39. His report is that the destruction at the Lord's coming will leave only a "sixth part" of the attacking army alive (39:2). If John's number of two hundred million is accurate, that means a lot of dead people and abandoned equipment will litter the "mountains of Israel" (39:4). In fact, the record suggests that for seven years, Israel will not need to use any of its own resources for energy and fuel because what is left from the destroyed army.

And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years: So that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire: and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord GOD (Ezek 39:9,10).

We also learn in this chapter that burying the dead will require seven months (39:12) and that everybody will be involved in the project (39:13). After those months, the Jews will employ men full-time for the express purpose of burying those missed in the initial cleanup,

And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it: after the end of seven months shall they search. And the passengers that pass through the land, when any seeth a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamongog (39:14,15).

Malachi's description of this awful day is the most frequently quoted:

For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do [this], saith the LORD of hosts (Mal. 4:1-3).

Speaking of these days to his disciples, the Lord said, "be not troubled, for, when all these things shall come to pass, ye may know that the promises which have been made unto you shall be fulfilled" (D&C 45:35; JS-M 1:23).

2. MALACHI TEACHES ABOUT THE BLESSINGS THAT COME TO THOSE WHO PAY TITHES AND OFFERINGS.

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it (Mal. 3:8-10)

Many of you are involved in tithing settlement. I have been deeply moved by the contemplation of what is happening throughout the world at this time of the year as disciples of the Lord present themselves to his servants and declare their faithfulness to this commandment. But I am also aware that there are many who have not yet realized the spiritual and temporal blessings that come from obedience..

Let me give you a story of a woman in São Paulo, Brazil. She worked while going to school to provide for her family. I use her own words in telling this story. She says:

“The university in which I studied had a regulation that prohibited the students that were in debt from taking tests. For this reason, when I received my salary I would first separate the money for tithing and offerings, and the remainder was allotted for the payment of the school and other expenses.

“I remember a time when I ... faced serious financial difficulties. It was a Thursday when I received my salary. When I figured the monthly budget, I noticed that there wouldn't be enough to pay [both] my tithing and my university. I would have to choose between them. The bimonthly tests would start the following week, and if I didn't take them I could lose the school year. I felt great agony. ... My heart ached. I had a painful decision before me, and I didn't know what to decide. I pondered between the two choices: to pay tithing or to risk the possibility of not obtaining the necessary credits to be approved in school.

“This feeling consumed my soul and remained with me up to Saturday. It was then that I remembered that when I was baptized I had agreed to live the law of tithing. I had taken upon myself an obligation, not with the missionaries, but with my Heavenly Father. At that moment, the anguish started to disappear, giving place to a pleasant sensation of tranquility and determination. ...

“That night when I prayed, I asked the Lord to forgive me for my indecision. On Sunday, before the beginning of sacrament meeting, I contacted the bishop, and with great pleasure I paid my tithing and offerings. That was a special day. I felt happy and peaceful within myself and with Heavenly Father.

“The next day I was in my office; I tried to find a way to be able to take the tests that would begin on Wednesday. The more I thought, the further I felt from a solution. At that time I worked in an attorney's office, and my employer was the most strict and austere person I had ever met.

“The working period was ending when my employer approached and gave the last orders of the day. When he had done so, with his briefcase in his hand he bid farewell. ... Suddenly, he halted, and looking at me he asked, ‘How is your college?’ I was

surprised, and I couldn't believe what I was hearing. The only thing I could answer with a trembling voice was, 'Everything is all right!' He looked . . . at me and bid farewell again. . . .

"Suddenly the secretary entered the room, saying that I was a very fortunate person! When I asked her why, she simply answered: 'The employer has just said that from today on the company is going to pay fully for your college and your books. Before you leave, stop at my desk and inform me of the costs so that tomorrow I can give you the check.'

"After she left, crying and feeling very humble, I knelt exactly where I was and thanked the Lord for His generosity. I . . . said to Heavenly Father that He didn't have to bless me so much. I only needed the cost of one month's installment, and the tithing I had paid on Sunday was very small compared to the amount I was receiving! During that prayer the words recorded in Malachi came to my mind: 'Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it' (Mal. 3:10). Up to that moment I had never felt the magnitude of the promise contained in that scripture and that this commandment was truly a witness of the love that God, our Heavenly Father, gives to His children here on earth" (Pres. Gordon B. Hinckley, "We Walk by Faith," CR, April 2002)

3. MALACHI PROPHECIES OF ELIJAH 'S RETURN TO THE EARTH TO RESTORE THE KEYS OF THE SEALING POWER.

We live in a day when "the love of many shall wax cold" (JS-M 1:10), and when men "are without affection, and they hate their own blood" (Moses 7:33). But we are not a part of that. Elijah's return with the sealing power has not only given us the power to bind families together in eternity, but also to bind them in love. This *turning of the hearts*" must be emotional as well as literal. How can anyone describe the joy that comes from knowing that the sweetest feelings of the heart are eternalized by the sealing power Elijah brought back to the earth.

Malachi's description of the restoration of this sealing power is wonderful.

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse (Malachi 4:5,6).

President Kimball spoke with conspicuous eloquence about the dangers of choosing any other way to bind a family.

Are you willing to jeopardize your eternities, your great continuing happiness, your privilege to see God and dwell in his presence? For the want of investigation and study and contemplation; because of prejudice, misunderstanding, or lack of knowledge, are you willing to forego these great blessings and privileges? Are you willing to make yourself a widow for eternity or a widower for endless ages—a single, separate individual to live alone and serve others? Are you willing to give up your children when they die or when you expire, and make them orphans? Are you willing to go through eternity alone and solitary when all of the greatest joys you have ever experienced in life could be “added upon” and accentuated, multiplied, and eternalized? Are you willing, with the Sadducees, to ignore and reject these great truths? I sincerely pray you stop today and weigh and measure and then prayerfully proceed to make your happy marriage an eternal one. Our friends, please do not ignore this call. I beg of you, open your eyes and see; unstop your ears and hear (Spencer W. Kimball, “Temples and Eternal Marriage,” Ensign, Aug. 1974, 6).

CONCLUSION: Just more that sixteen years ago I snapped a photo of my three youngest sons. They were three, five, and seven years old, I think. They posed on a dirt road in the mountains, with expressions that match almost perfectly their personalities. On the 20th of October of this year, the two youngest shared a sacrament meeting as one reported his mission and the other prepared to depart on his. At the house later I took the three of them into the back yard, all in white shirts and ties (the oldest served a

mission in California a few years ago), and had them recreate the expressions and positions of that earlier photo. I then took another picture. The two prints hang together, enlarged and delightful on a prominent wall in my house. I looked at them the other day and wept, moved almost beyond reason by my love and their goodness. How can I possibly thank the Lord adequately for his blessing in having given them to me and my wife forever by means of the sealing power?

How thankful I am for the blessings of the Lord. His Second Coming will not interrupt my joy, but confirm it. Elijah's promises cannot be undone by a little fire and vapor and smoke. That coming will indeed be dreadful for some, but for us, it will be truly great. I want to find a way to do what Nephi suggested, and "shout praises to the Holy One of Israel" (2 Nephi 31:13).

ANOTHER AUTHOR'S NOTE: I have been invited to continue this forum next year. I wrote the New Testament lessons four years ago for Mormontown, but that site has disappeared, and LDS Living has offered me the chance to review, revise, and rewrite those lessons. If you have suggestions or questions, or even concerns, feel free to let me know at tedgibbons@yahoo.com.

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