

# NT LESSON #43

## A CHOSEN GENERATION

1 & 2 Peter, Jude  
by Ted L. Gibbons

Some of you may remember the print and televised Dodge commercials from a few years ago –the ones that always ended with the word *different*? I have a couple of the printed ones in my files. One shows four rows of four birds each—15 are identical black crows. But the 16<sup>th</sup> bird—the last one in the last row, is a red and brightly colored parrot. Another shows five rows of four nuts. Fifteen are chromed metallic pieces threaded in the center for use on bolts. . . But the final nut in the final row is a red pistachio. Under the parrot and the pistachio is this caption:

DODGE DIFFERENT

Peter might have designed ads much like these for church members. He said in 1 Peter 2:9:

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light . . .

This sounds like the instruction of Moses at Mt. Sinai. Moses charged the House of Israel in this way:

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above

all people: for all the earth is mine . . . (Exodus 19:5).

In my files I have copy of a painting of 8 swans standing in a snowy field. They are in a half-circle around a stunning peacock with his tail spread and his feathers flashing. I have no idea what the artist had in mind, but the painting has always reminded me of the words of Peter and of Moses. We are peculiar. We must be different from the world. We must stand out. We must be what the Lord told John he could be in the midst of a darkening world—a flaming fire (see D&C 7:6).

As we have studied the New Testament, we have read repeatedly of the expectation of the Lord and his prophets that we not be like the world, that our conduct and our conversation be above reproach. We have been directed to love our neighbors and our enemies, to feed those who have no hope of returning the favor, to forgive seventy times seven times, to be in the world but not of the world. We are commanded to be different. And in fact, if we live our religion and keep our covenants, in the world's eyes we will be peculiar indeed.

Faithful members of the Church who have taken upon themselves the name of Christ [have] been adopted into his family. "Ye are the children of the Lord your God: . . . For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth" (Deut. 14:1-2).

Manifestly such a people, as certified by their way of life in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, are deemed by worldly people to be peculiar (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol.3, p.295 - p.296).

No New Testament author emphasized the peculiar nature of saints, and the ways in which they differ from the world, with more clarity and

beauty than Peter. Joseph Smith said of him, "Peter penned the most sublime language of any of the apostles" (May 17, 1843, DHC 5:392.) I hope you enjoy it.

## **I. LIVE IN FAITH AND HOLINESS AS A CHOSEN GENERATION** (1 Peter 1; 2:1-10)

We are aware of things, we understand and believe things, of which the world is entirely unaware. Even the finest and purest of Christians from other faiths, lacking prophets, revelation, and modern scripture, do not understand much of the meaning of Peter's description of saints:

Peter says of us that because of the "abundant mercy" of Christ, we are

Begotten . . . again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations. (1 Peter 1:3-6)

- ' We are begotten to a lively hope by the resurrection
- ' We are begotten . . . to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled
- ' We are *kept* by the power of God through faith
- ' We can therefore rejoice
- ' In spite of "heaviness through manifold temptations."

Notice that the *footnote* for "Manifold temptations" uses the words *trials* and *afflictions* as synonyms. This is important because of the content of verses 7-9:

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ; Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:7-9)

Why is our faith more precious than gold? Peter suggests some reasons here:

- ' gold perishes
- ' gold melts in a fire that will hardly toast the edges of faith
- ' trials increase our ability to praise and honor the Savior.
- ' trials increase our love for him without the need to see him
- ' we are thereby enabled to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory"
- ' and then, because of this faith, we receive the blessing in which we have had faith—the "salvation of [our] souls."

So Peter charges us: "gird up the loins of your mind . . ." (1 Peter 1:13)

This is again wonderful imagery. I watched lithe and powerful Egyptian workers return from a lunch break when I was in Cairo many years ago. They were working on scaffolding many stories high at the side of a tall brick building. The only way up was to grasp pipes of the scaffolding and climb, but they were, one and all, wearing thick, full-length caftans. They visited for a moment at the bottom of the wall, and then almost as if the movement had been choreographed, they stooped, grasped the bottom of their beautiful robes, wrapped them between their legs and around their waists, and tucked them in, and began to climb. They were "girding up their loins!"

But Peter tells us to gird up the loins *of the mind*. I think he means that we cannot wear our membership like a frock coat and a top hat. We must get ready, mentally, to go to work. We must prepare for action. Discipleship in a world of iniquity is not easy. We are not invited to be pretty good, nor to be better than the “natural men” we meet every moment of our lives. No. We are commanded, “be ye holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:16)

And this is not a passive resistance to evil and iniquity. This kind of holiness will require work and we will of necessity have to gird up the loins of our mind, because “. . . the Father, . . . without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work . . .” (1 Peter 1:17)

We are not going to be redeemed by our wealth, nor by our conversations about it, nor by the traditions we received from our fathers. We are going to be redeemed by the “precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot . . .” (1 Peter 1: 18,19) or we are not going to be redeemed at all. Nothing else merits our best efforts. Not fame, not fortune, not praise nor power from the world. “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away . . .” (1 Peter 1:24)

## **II. FOLLOW THE SAVIOR'S EXAMPLE IN ENDURING TRIALS AND PERSECUTION** (1 Peter 2:19-24; 3:13-17; 4:12-19)

The recurrent New Testament theme of suffering which we found at the beginning of James reappears here with an interesting insight from the chief apostle.

For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it,

ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. (1 Peter 2:20)

For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. (1 Peter 3:17)

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. (1 Peter 4:13-16)

We must expect that life will turn out to be a test. As Sterling W. Sill said (sorry I do not have the reference here) "You were not sent into the vineyard to eat the grapes." The message of the Lord to Abraham is a message for all of us.

"We will prove them herewith [with mortality, with the earth], to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them." (Ab. 3:25)

Part of that proving—that testing is to see what we will do about our covenants when they are hard to keep. How will we respond, what will we say and do when we are required to suffer for our righteousness? Satan seems to be of the opinion that pain and adversity will turn all of us into apostates. At least that is what he suggested to the Lord in the book of Job.

When the Lord pointed out the righteousness of Job, Satan responded by saying, "Doth Job fear God for nought?"

Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. (Job 1:9,10)

You understand what the adversary is suggesting: *Job is perfectly protected in his righteousness. You have built a hedge—a wall-around him. Everything he touches turns to gold. If his name weren't Job it would be Midas. Of course he serves you. His service is making him rich. But . . .*

. . .put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. Job 1:10,11)

As a matter of fact, Job's wife does the very thing Lucifer expected. When the loss of family and personal property and wealth was compounded by the disease of chapter 2, Job's wife says to him, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die." (Job 2:9)

Peter's appeal, echoing through the ages to a time when the righteous still suffer unjustly is that we retain our integrity and bear patiently the trials that come. We must be willing in the midst of undeserved suffering to say with Job, "Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live." (Job 27:5.,6)

Pres. Hunter said:

What makes us imagine that we may be immune from the

same experiences that refined the lives of former-day Saints? We must remember that the same forces of resistance which prevent our progress afford us also opportunities to overcome. God will have a tried people (C.R., April 1980, pp. 36-37)

### **III. PARTAKE OF THE DIVINE NATURE AND STRIVE TO MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE (2 Peter 1)**

. . .his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these promises ye might be *partakers of the divine nature*, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. (2 Peter 1:3,4 *emphasis added*)

This divine nature is another quality of Christian disciples that sets them apart from the world. But we must let this nature grow in our character. We must add to the goodness that comes to us as members of his Church and kingdom.

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. (2 Peter 1:5-7)

Peter here identifies each of the characteristics mentioned in D&C 4, except humility and diligence. These are critical qualities,

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that



ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. (2 Peter 1:8,9)

And so Peter tell us to

give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall . . . (2 Peter 1:10)

Calling and election mean the same thing. We were "elect[ed] according to the foreknowledge of God." (1 Peter 1:2) Because of faith and good works in the pre-existence (see Alma 13), we were *called* or *elected* to certain privileges in this life, and to be the recipients of

all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world. . . (Ephesians 1:3,4)

Certain things were prophesied conditionally about us. If we live by the Spirit and give diligence to acquiring the attributes of Godhood, then our calling and election are *made sure*. That is, we receive the "more sure word of prophecy." (2 Peter 1:19)

D&C 131:5 tells us that

The more sure word of prophecy means a man's knowing that he is sealed up unto eternal life, by revelation and the spirit of prophecy, through the power of the Holy Priesthood.

#### **IV. RESIST FALSE TEACHERS AND THOSE WHO DENY THE**

## **SECOND COMING** (2 Peter 2,3; Jude)

Both Peter and Jude send a warning to us across the centuries. "There shall be false prophets among you." (2 Peter 2:1) Which of us has not seen them or felt their influence on ourselves or our loved ones or our friends.

My closest friend in high school is no longer a member of the church. He invited me one day after years of separation to have dinner with him in a Salt Lake restaurant. While we ate he told me of his newfound faith, that he had finally found the "fullness," and that he was leaving this Church and his wife and five lovely children to embrace it and to take another wife who understood the truth as he did.

An Elder's Quorum President from a ward on the East Coast called me and asked permission to come to my home and tell me what had happened to him. I did not extend an invitation, but during our conversation on the phone, I learned that he believed that he was the one "mighty and strong" (D&C 85:7), called of God to be the truly inspired prophet of this dispensation.

I told him that in the matter of being the "one mighty and strong, holding the scepter of power" he had substantial competition. I have personally known four men who have made this claim. He was not discouraged. He sent me a revelation calling me to the Quorum of the Twelve in his newly organized church.

All of this Peter foresaw. He knew that we would have to contend with false prophets and false teachers, men and women "who privily shall bring in abominable heresies." (2 Peter 2:1, JST) These were people who would "with feigned words make merchandise of [us]." (2 Peter 2:3) And he knew that "many [would] follow their pernicious ways." (2 Peter

2:2)

The resentment of Peter toward these apostates is startling. They are, he says, “natural brute beasts . . .” (2 Peter 2:12); they are “spots and blemishes” (2 Peter 2:113) who have “gone astray, following the way of Balaam” (2 Peter 2:15). “These are wells without water” (2 Peter 2:17), who speak “great swelling words of vanity, [and] allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.” (2 Peter 2:18)

Jude calls them “filthy dreamers” (Jude 1:8), “spots in your feasts of charity” and “clouds . . . without water” (Jude 1:12). Some translators of the New Testament have suggested that the word rendered as “spots” in this verse should actually be “reefs” or “blemishes”. Regardless of its accuracy, the thought of these “filthy dreamers” as reefs presents a powerful image of the damage they can do to unsuspecting voyagers on the seas of mortality.

In the next verse (Jude 1:13), Jude refers to them as *wandering stars*. Ancient mariners used to traverse the vast expanse of the world's oceans with the stars as guides—particularly the polar star because it does not move. In my scriptures I wrote in the margin above *wandering stars* this phrase: “rock stars, movie stars, sports stars.”

Those who elect to take their bearings for the journey through mortality from stars that move—from wandering stars—will surely find themselves wrecked on unexpected reefs. But there is the prophetic alternative. Jude speaks of it in verse 17: “Remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles . . .”

Take a look at Facsimile #2 in the book of Abraham, pages 36 and 37. Under *Explanation*, Fig. 5, we read that

Enish-go-on-dosh . . . is one of the governing planets also, and is said by the Egyptians to be the Sun, and to borrow its light from Kolob through the medium of Kae-e-vanrash, which is the grand Key, or, in other words, the governing power, which governs fifteen other fixed planets or stars... (Abraham 2 Fac.:5).

I do not want to make more of this than is appropriate, but it is at least interesting that Kolob, the star nearest the residence of God (Fig. 1), governs *fifteen fixed planets or stars*. Whether the image is intentional or not, it is nevertheless true that we have fifteen fixed— not wandering—stars from which to take our bearings: the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. And they take their bearings from Christ, who ought to be, according to President Hinckley, like our “polar star.”

We live in a world of uncertainty. For some, there will be great accomplishment. For others, disappointment. For some, much of rejoicing and gladness, good health, and gracious living. For others, perhaps sickness and a measure of sorrow. We do not know. But one thing we do know. Like the polar star in the heavens, regardless of what the future holds, there stands the Redeemer of the world, the Son of God, certain and sure as the anchor of our immortal lives. He is the rock of our salvation, our strength, our comfort, the very focus of our faith.

In sunshine and in shadow we look to Him, and He is there to assure and smile upon us (Gordon B. Hinckley, C.R., Sunday Afternoon, April 2002).

## **CONCLUSION**

In 1 Peter 3:15 we are instructed: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

It is incumbent upon us as saints of the Most High to be willing at any moment ("at all times and all places, and in all things" --Mosiah 18:9) to testify of the truth and explain the love and devotion we have for the Savior and his work. We cannot be so much like the world that we are unable to be distinguished by our conduct from the world. What gladness we should feel when someone says to us, "What is it about you that makes you so different?"

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