

Teaching Objective

Prophetic commentary on the standard works helps unlock the scriptures by providing a greater and clearer understanding of scripture.

Themes

1. Prophetic commentary on the scriptures is of great value.
2. There are various sources of prophetic commentary.

Teaching Ideas

1. Prophetic commentary on the scriptures is of great value.

- One of the roles of the living prophets is to explain to us the meaning of what prophets of past ages said. Discuss 2 Peter 1:20–21 with students.
- Discuss the following statement from Elder Marion G. Romney, then an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, in which he emphasized the importance of prophetic interpretation of scripture: “Another fundamental to bear in mind in our search is that the manifestations of the Father’s will to this generation did not cease with what is written in the Doctrine and Covenants. He has not left us unguided to jangle over the interpretations of those revelations, nor does he leave us ignorant of his will on current issues. He has given us living prophets to interpret those revelations and to declare to us his will on present problems” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1945, 89).
- Discuss the following statements, pointing out that the prophets will always be in harmony with the scriptures:

Elder Marriner W. Merrill, who was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said: “The Bible is a good thing, the Book of Mormon is a good thing, and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants is a good thing. They are the words of the Lord. But I say that the living oracles of the Church are worth more than all of them. If we could have but one of them, give me the living oracles of the Priesthood for my guidance. Of course, it is proper and a good thing to have it all, because the living oracles of the Church work in harmony with what is written, and their counsel will not come in conflict with the words of the Lord in former ages. But the conditions of mankind change. The counsel that was suitable for

the Saints forty years ago may not be so suitable today. Hence the importance of having in our midst the living oracles of God to guide us day by day in the performance of our labors” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1897, 6).

Elder Anthony W. Ivins, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, taught: “It is not enough that we become acquainted somewhat with the cardinal principles of the gospel. It is not enough that we understand only the dispensation in which we live. But we must go back to the beginning we must understand the written word of the Lord as we have it in these sacred books, even from the beginning until the day in which we live. We must understand the harmony that exists between all these gospel dispensations, and then we will begin to understand how admirably our work fits in the time, and the place, and the manner in which the Lord has decreed that it should come about. The work that He has decreed, that He has accomplished is all in harmony with the words of the prophets which have been spoken since the beginning” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1908, 15).

2. There are various sources of prophetic commentary.

- Following are several examples that may be used to illustrate prophetic interpretation of scriptures. Divide the class into groups and give each group source material that contains prophetic commentary about the scriptures. Have students list and then explain to the class the insights they find. Source material could include conference addresses, *Church News*, and messages of the First Presidency from the *Ensign*.

Matthew 13:24–30. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “We learn by this parable [of the tares], not only the setting up of the Kingdom in the days of the Savior, which is represented by the good seed, which produced fruit, but also the corruptions of the Church, which are represented by the tares, which were sown by the enemy, which His disciples would fain have plucked up, or cleansed the Church of, if their views had been favored by the Savior. But He, knowing all things, says, Not so. As much as to say, your views are not correct, the Church is in its infancy, and if you take this rash step, you will destroy the wheat, or the Church, with the tares; therefore it is better to let them grow together until the harvest, or the end of the world, which means the destruction of the wicked, which is not yet fulfilled” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 97–98).

Abraham 3:22–23. “God showed unto Abraham ‘the intelligences that were organized before the world was’; and by ‘intelligences’ we are to understand personal ‘spirits’ (Abraham 3:22, 23)” (“The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Twelve,” in James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5:26; see also James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 466).

Acts 10:34–35. President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: “Peter said: ‘. . . God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted’ by him (Acts 10:34–35), which means that the Lord will pour out his Spirit upon the faithful so they will know of themselves of the truths of this religion” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, 5; or *Ensign*, June 1971, 4).

Doctrine and Covenants 29:17. President Spencer W. Kimball said: “The Lord teaches that he cannot forgive people *in* their sins; he can only save them *from* their abandoned sins. The Lord clearly says, ‘My blood shall not cleanse them if they hear me

not.’ (D&C 29:17.) *Hear* in this instance means to accept and abide his teachings” (“The Gospel of Repentance,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1982, 5).

Moses 7:62. President Ezra Taft Benson taught: “The Book of Mormon is the instrument that God designed to ‘sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out [His] elect.’ (Moses 7:62)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1988, 3; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 4).

Supplementary Study Sources

- Ezra Taft Benson, “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet,” in *Speeches of the Year, 1980*, 26–30.

Suggested Student Study

- Invite students to begin annotating their scriptures with authoritative doctrinal interpretations.