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Lesson 5: Satan's Opposition to the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon

Author(s): Roy W. Doxey

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Abstract: In opposition to the Lord's great work of saving the souls of mankind, Satan has sought to destroy the same. Joseph Smith was cautioned that temptations would arise concerning the gold plates. The loss of the manuscript was not a frustration to God's work, it was an important lesson.



LESSON DEPARTMENT

Theology—The Doctrine and Covenants

Lesson 5—Satan's Opposition to the Coming Forth of The Book of Mormon

Elder Roy W. Doxey

(Text: The Doctrine and Covenants: Sections 3 and 10)

For Tuesday, February 4, 1958

Objective: Remember, remember that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men (D. & C. 3:3).

Satan the Archenemy of God

From the creation of Adam, there has been opposition to the Lord's work on the part of Satan. He has sought to destroy the souls of men by his enticings; whereas, the purposes of the Lord have been to bring about the ". . . immortality and eternal life of man" (The Pearl of Great Price, Moses 1:39). When the Lord has instituted his work upon the earth, the powers of Lucifer have also been present to seek to destroy or, in any way, to hinder the Lord's purposes. This dispensation of the gospel is by no means an exception. When Joseph Smith sought the Lord in prayer to determine which of all the churches was right, the powers of darkness were present to interfere. Here are the words of Joseph Smith:

. . . I kneeled down and began to offer up the desire of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was

seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction.

But, exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction—not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being—just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound . . . (The Pearl of Great Price, *Writings of Joseph Smith* 2:15-17).

Notice the words ". . . not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of

some actual being from the unseen world . . ." (*Ibid.*, 2:16). Joseph Smith had come to understand, in part, the power of Satan and also the power of God on the same day. Joseph may not have known at this time that during his life many efforts would be made by evil forces to keep him from following the counsel of the Lord, but the angel Moroni cautioned him against such a temptation. (See *Ibid.*, 2:46.)

Background of Sections 3 and 10

A notable example of Satan's efforts to deceive is found in the study of Sections 3 and 10 of our text. After receiving the gold plates from the angel Moroni and having translated some of the characters thereon, the Prophet was asked by Martin Harris to permit him to take the manuscript pages of translated material and show them to members of his family. Two times Martin Harris was denied the privilege to show the manuscript to others, but a third request of the Lord by Joseph Smith brought forth permission to do so. The provision was that it should be shown to only five persons and to none others. By stratagem others to whom Martin Harris showed the manuscript got it away from him, and it was never recovered. (See *D. H. C.* I:21.)

The Lord's Rebuke to Joseph

These circumstances bring us to a consideration of Section 3, which constitutes the Lord's rebuke to Joseph Smith for his part in allowing the manuscript to be lost. In the light of these conditions, the first three verses of the revelation state that the works of God cannot be frustrated, but it is the works of men that are frustrated.

It seems that at this point in the Prophet's life the Lord was teaching him an important lesson. He was to trust in the Lord, who would always uphold him, and not to fear man more than God (*D. & C.* 3:4-8). We might well ask ourselves at this point wherein we fear "man more than God" and do not put our confidence in the Lord to assist us? Do we, for example, accept the entreaties of friends and associates and violate a commandment of the Lord in order to keep the friendship or good will of those persons? Or do we stand for the word of the Lord and his promises to us if we are faithful?

Joseph Smith's Honesty

Consider also, for a moment, the importance of this revelation in attesting to the honesty of Joseph Smith. He stood rebuked by the Lord for his part in the loss of the translated portion of the plates, but, at the same time, he made known this rebuke to his friends and to the world in allowing the revelation to become known and printed. At times people have questioned the integrity of the Prophet, but this revelation stands as a monument to the basic honesty of Joseph Smith.

After receiving Section 3, Joseph recorded that ". . . both the plates and the Urim and Thummim were taken from me again; but in a few days they were returned to me, when I inquired of the Lord . . ." (*D. H. C.* I:23). The Lord then gave to the Prophet section 10.

Analysis of Section 10

In order for us to have a connected account of this episode in our Church history, a study should now

be made of Section 10, especially verses 1 through 45. As indicated in the superscription (italicized foreword), this revelation is about the designs of wicked men to alter the manuscript in order to destroy the truthfulness of The Book of Mormon when Joseph would print as a part of that book the retranslated portion which was "lost."

Plot to Destroy the Lord's Work Revealed

Verses 1 through 3 of Section 10 refer to the gift of translation which Joseph had received with the further admonition that he was to ". . . be diligent unto the end" (D. & C. 10:4). Martin Harris is condemned by the Lord as a "wicked" man, because he was not faithful in keeping his covenant to show the manuscript to only five persons, but permitted it to get out of his hands forever. (See D. & C. 10:6-9). Now comes that part of the revelation which describes the purpose of the men in altering the manuscript (D. & C. 10:10-19). But who does the Lord say is the instigator of this plot to destroy his work. It is Satan (D. & C. 10:10, 14). From this point on the Lord reveals to the Prophet and Martin Harris (and us) the designs of that wicked one, Satan, to destroy the Lord's work and also ". . . that he may lead their souls to destruction" (D. & C. 10:22). (Read The Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 28 for information on the works of Lucifer in the last days.)

Satan's Tactics

Observe the tactics of Satan in his leading men and women astray:

Yea, he stirreth up their hearts to anger against this work.

Yea, he saith unto them: Deceive and lie in wait to catch, that ye may destroy; behold, this is no harm. And thus he flattereth them, and telleth them that it is no sin to lie that they may catch a man in a lie, that they may destroy him.

And thus he flattereth them, and leadeth them along until he draggeth their souls down to hell; and thus he causeth them to catch themselves in their own snare.

And thus he goeth up and down, to and fro in the earth, seeking to destroy the souls of men (D. & C. 10:24-27).

Upon the basis of what you have already learned from this revelation, do you believe that Satan is an actual being and not an imaginary product of the mind?

The Lord's Foreordained Plan

In verses 30 to 45 the Lord informs the Prophet that he is to translate from the small plates of Nephi and not to retranslate from the plates that portion of the Nephite history which Martin Harris had lost. Foreseeing the circumstances which gave rise to the revelations known to us as Sections 3 and 10, the Lord inspired Nephi and early historians to keep the additional set of plates (The Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 9:2-6; Words of Mormon, verses 3-7). This part which now contains the books of Nephi to Omni, inclusive, in The Book of Mormon ". . . is more particular concerning the things which, in my wisdom, I would bring to the knowledge of the people . . . [and] which do throw greater views upon my gospel . . ." (D. & C. 10:40, 45), declared the Lord. It would seem that we are more richly

blessed by reason of having the translated material from the small plates of Nephi which contains “. . . the ministry and prophecies . . .” (1 Nephi 19:3; 9:4), and the “sacred” things (1 Nephi 19:6), whereas the other plates gave “. . . a greater account of the wars and contentions and destructions of my [Nephi] people . . .” (1 Nephi 19:4).

What does the Lord prescribe in this revelation that Joseph Smith might do, and which we also must do, to gain a victory over Satan?

Pray always, that you may come off conqueror; yea, that you may conquer Satan, and that you may escape the hands of the servants of Satan that do uphold his work (D. & C. 10:5).

Additional Items in Sections 10 and 3

Section 10: The Nephites prayed that their brethren the Lamanites should have the gospel in the latter days (D. & C. 10:48), and that this gospel should be made known to others who should possess this land of Zion and, “. . . that whosoever should believe in this gospel in this land might have eternal life” (D. & C. 10:50). It was also their wish that this land should be a free land. (See D. & C. 10:49-51.)

On the other hand, those upon this land who build up churches to get gain, and do wickedly and thus build up the kingdom of the devil shall be caused “. . . to tremble and shake to the center” (D. & C. 10:56).

The Lord avows that the people shall learn of the “other sheep” of whom he spoke during his mortal ministry (John 10:16), and of the

gospel which he brought to them. This will be by The Book of Mormon which shall “. . . bring to light the true points of my doctrine, yea, and the only doctrine which is in me” (D. & C. 10:62). Again we are aware of one phase of Satan’s activities; namely, to:

. . . stir up the hearts of the people to contention concerning the points of my doctrine; and in these things they do err, for they do wrest the scriptures and do not understand them (D. & C. 10:63).

Finally, in closing this revelation, the Lord points out what his doctrine is (D. & C. 10:67), and he who declares anything less than that doctrine “. . . is not of my church” (D. & C. 10:68).

And now, behold, whosoever is of my church, and endureth of my church to the end, him will I establish upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them (D. & C. 10:69).

Section 3: Notice verse 9 in which the Prophet is reminded that he “. . . wast chosen to do the work of the Lord . . .” and compare it with 2 Nephi 3:1-15, especially verses 6-8, 11, 14, 15.

In Section 3:16-20, the purposes of the coming forth of The Book of Mormon are made known. These verses contribute to our understanding of the purposes given on the title page of The Book of Mormon.

Questions for Discussion

1. Why has Satan opposed the Lord’s work in this dispensation?
2. Why do you think the Lord rebuked Joseph Smith because of the loss of the

translated part of The Book of Mormon plates?

3. In what way does Section 3 attest to the honesty of Joseph Smith?

4. How does Section 10 verify the fact that Satan is a personal being?

5. Discuss: "It is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men."

Visiting Teacher Messages— Truths to Live By From The Doctrine and Covenants

**Message 5— ". . . Behold, You Should Not Have Feared Man
More Than God . . ." (D. & C. 3:7).**

Christine H. Robinson

For Tuesday, February 4, 1958

Objective: To show that to fear God means to love him and to keep his commandments and that in so doing we earn the respect of all good people.

RECENTLY a group of college students were discussing what they wanted most out of life. Some were seeking financial security; others, power; but the majority agreed that what was really important was the good will, respect, and approbation of their fellow men.

It is good to seek the respect of others. However, we make a mistake when we allow our fear of criticism and disapproval of others to cause us to violate the principles we know to be right.

To fear man more than we fear God actually means that we are more anxious to please others than we are to live by the principles God has set down for us to follow. One example is in the matter of expressing our thankfulness and asking the Lord's blessings in prayer. Sometimes in strange places or among strangers, many of us are tempted to avoid criticism from others, and we fail to pray.

The story is told of a young draftee in the army who had always knelt in prayer before going to bed. But in the barracks, in the presence of all the other boys, he feared to follow the usual practice lest he be ridiculed. Consequently, he waited until he thought all the boys were asleep before he slipped out of bed to say his prayers. On one occasion the young man on the cot next to his observed him and remarked that he, too, had wanted to say his prayers but had been afraid to do so. This gave both boys courage, and soon thereafter others saw them, admired them, and followed their example. Thus, nightly prayers came to be the regular practice by many of the boys.

It is true that often the very things we fear might bring ridicule from others, actually build respect and admiration. Constancy, consistency, and adherence to right principles are choice character quali-