

Summary Handout

“We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet”

Lesson
37
Summary

Scripture Summary: *Doctrine and Covenants 1:38; Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, during a special conference of elders of the Church, held at Hiram, Ohio, November 1, 1831. HC 1: 221—224. Many revelations had been received from the Lord prior to this time, and the compilation of these for publication in book form was one of the principal subjects passed upon at the conference. This section constitutes the Lord’s Preface to the doctrines, covenants, and commandments given in this dispensation. 37—39, Search these commandments.*

Doctrine and Covenants 21:1; 4—6; Revelation given to Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Fayette, New York, April 6, 1830. HC 1: 74—79. This revelation was given at the organization of the Church, on the date named, in the home of Peter Whitmer, Sen. Six men, who had previously been baptized, participated. By unanimous vote these persons expressed their desire and determination to organize, according to the commandment of God; see Section 20. They also voted to accept and sustain Joseph Smith, Jun., and Oliver Cowdery as the presiding officers of the Church. With the laying on of hands, Joseph then ordained Oliver an elder of the Church; and Oliver similarly ordained Joseph. After administration of the sacrament, Joseph and Oliver laid hands upon the participants individually, for the bestowal of the Holy Ghost and for the confirmation of each as a member of the Church. 1—3, Joseph Smith is called to be a seer, translator, prophet, apostle, and elder; 4—8, His word shall guide the cause of Zion.

Doctrine and Covenants 43:2; Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Kirtland, Ohio, in February 1831. HC 1: 154—156. At this time some members of the Church were disturbed by people making false claims as revelators. The Prophet inquired of the Lord and received this communication addressed to the elders of the Church. The first part deals with matters of Church polity; the latter part contains a warning that the elders are to give to the nations of the earth. 1—7, Revelations and commandments come only through the one appointed.

Doctrine and Covenants 68:3—4; Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Hiram, Ohio, November 1831, at the request of Orson Hyde, Luke S. Johnson, Lyman E. Johnson, and William E. McLellin. HC 1: 227—229. Although this revelation was given in response to supplication that the mind of the Lord be made known concerning the elders named, much of the content pertains to the whole Church. 1—5, Words of elders when moved upon by the Holy Ghost are scripture.

Doctrine and Covenants 20:21—26; Revelation on Church Organization and Government, given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, April 1830. HC 1: 64—70. Preceding his record of this revelation the Prophet wrote: “We obtained of him [Jesus Christ] the following, by the spirit of prophecy and revelation; which not only gave us much information, but also pointed out to us the precise day upon which, according to his will and commandment, we should proceed to organize his Church once more here upon the earth.” 17—29, The doctrines of creation, fall, atonement, and baptism are affirmed.

Mosiah 8:13—18; Ammon teaches the people of Limhi – He learns of the twenty-four Jaredite plates—Ancient records can be translated by seers – The gift of seership exceeds all others.

Mosiah 13:33; Abinadi is protected by divine power – He teaches the Ten Commandments—Salvation does not come by the law of Moses alone – God himself shall make an atonement and redeem his people.

Doctrine and Covenants 107:22; 91—92; Revelation on priesthood, given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Kirtland, Ohio, dated March 28, 1835. HC 2: 209-217. On the date named the Twelve met in council, confessing their individual weaknesses and shortcomings, expressing repentance, and seeking the further guidance of the Lord. They were about to separate on missions to districts assigned. Although portions of this section were received on the date named, the historical records affirm that various parts were received at sundry times, some as early as November 1831. 21—38, 85—100, Priesthood presidents govern their respective quorums.

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights: **Torah—Word of God:** The Bible is holy to Jews because it represents the Word of God. “This is particularly true of the Torah which is, so to speak, God’s direct statement. The halakhah, or Jewish law, which is the authoritative guide for a Jew’s life, is mainly based on the Torah, so obviously study of the Torah as well as the rest of the Bible is one of the prime religious duties. “The custom of reading the Torah publicly is very, very ancient—originating with Ezra in the fifth-fourth centuries B.C.E. At some later date a reading from the *Nevi’im* was added; this corresponding passage from the Prophets is known as the Haftorah.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

LDS “Reading of the Prophets:” The Latter-day Saints’ use of the Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price and the Book of Mormon is the LDS *Haftorah*. Literally it is the reading of the *Nevi’im*, the “Prophets,” with their explanations and heavenly insights. For Judaism, “looking to God” and “revelation” are almost figurative and in modern times have become unexplainable. For this lesson, let’s review some previous quotes.

Jewish Definition of Revelation: “Revelation, the act by which the hidden, unknown God shows himself to man. There is no specific term corresponding to ‘revelation’ in the Bible or in rabbinic Hebrew. God is said to ‘appear’ to the patriarchs and prophets, and the appearances are described by a series of anthropomorphic (i.e., human)

expressions and concrete images. Sometimes God manifests Himself ‘in a vision’ or ‘in a dream’ or he appears through the mediation of an angel. However, the Bible emphasizes that no direct, sensory perception of God is possible. Thus, various phrases are used when describing appearances of the Divine, for example *kavod* (‘glory’) or *shekhinah* (. . . ‘Divine Presence’) or *davar* (‘word’ of God).

Revelation Seems Stuck in the Past: “Any event in which the Divine presence is felt is called a revelation, but the term is applied more particularly to communications of the Divine will as revealed through God's messengers, the prophets. At Sinai, the principal revelation of God to man took place. At that time, all the assembled ‘heard’ the Voice of God, and through the mediation of Moses (who, according to the rabbis, functioned there as a scribe), received the complete text of the Torah and its interpretation, the Oral Law.

Prophet is Chosen: “The phenomenon of prophecy is founded on the basic belief that God makes His Will known to chosen individuals in successive generations. A prophet is a charismatic individual endowed with the divine gift of both receiving and imparting the message of revelation. A prophet does not choose his profession but is chosen, often against his own will, as in the case of Jonah, to convey the word of God to the people regardless of whether they wish to hear it. The prophet, although conscious of being overwhelmed by the divine word and of being involved in an encounter with God, is still capable of reacting and responding, and may even engage God in dialogue.

Individuality of the Prophet Is Never Affected: “No two prophets prophesied in the same style. God speaks to the prophet and the prophet in turn speaks out. “The early prophets played a prominent role in communal affairs and were consulted for advice and often influenced the political destiny of Israel; the prophet Samuel chose both Saul and David to be kings of Israel. At times they (prophets) had to bear the consequences of their own dire predictions – Jeremiah was put into stocks for his unpopular prophecies.

Mediator: “A prime function of the prophet was to defend his people and to act as a mediator on their behalf. He constantly pleaded with Israel to seek God that they might live. He prayed that repentance might have the desired effect of invoking mercy. A prophet was not charged with religious innovation: his function was to clarify the teachings of the Bible. Moses was the ‘master of the prophets.’ No prophet after him succeeded as he did in penetrating the nature of the Divine.” (*Encyclopædia Judaica Jr.*)

Prophets Witness of the Savior: In the New Testament, John knew who the Savior was. Like all prophets, he bore witness of the Lord and desired to bring people to Him. “Why did John send two of his disciples to Jesus to ask if he were the promised Messiah? (Matt. 11:2-6; Luke 7:19-23) Any inference that the Baptist was uncertain or doubtful in his own mind, as to the identity and mission of the Master, is totally unwarranted. In reality, the imprisoned Elias and forerunner of our Lord was using this means to persuade his disciples to forsake him and follow Jesus.” (*Bruce R. McConkie, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Vol.1, p.251*)

Moslem Concept of Prophets: In the religion of Islam, Moslems (or Muslims) have some concept of a Prophet, Muhammed. Yet he is considered to be the last of the prophets and did not testify of the Savior. In fact Mohammed taught that “God cannot have a son.”

Jews Concept of Prophets: Jews, on the other hand, feel that Prophets and Prophecy have ended yet they have an expectation of prophets returning, such as a Latter-day Joseph, Son of Joseph, a Latter-day David as well as Elijah and Moses.

Prophet’s Assistant: A comparison of Aaron to Moses presents an image that may help us understand the Savior’s power, entrusted to His apostles through the priesthood and gift of the Holy Ghost. “Aaron was clearly given a lesser role than Moses. Aaron experienced revelations from God and, being an eloquent speaker, acted as prophet and miracle-worker before Pharaoh in the matter of the Plagues of Egypt. However, it is significant that even where he plays an active role in performing the miracles, it is not a result of his own ability or initiative, but solely by divine command given through Moses.” (*Encyclopædia Judaica Jr.*)

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