

"Be Not Deceived, but Continue in Steadfastness"

Lesson 24

*Doctrine & Covenants & Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual,
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- Purpose:** To understand how we can avoid deception and apostasy.
- Preparation:**
1. Prayerfully study Doctrine and Covenants 26; 28; 43:1-7; 50; 52:14-19; and the other scriptures in this lesson.
 2. Obtain a chart of the current General Authorities from a recent conference issue of a Church magazine.
- Attn Activity:** Write the following phrases on the chalkboard:

A pint of cream

A misspelled name

No available seating at the Kirtland Temple dedication

Tell class members that these phrases all have something in common. They are all reasons given by early Church members for their apostasy from the Church.

Today's lesson discusses how to avoid individual apostasy. These phrases and the stories that go with them will be explained later in the lesson.

1. We should recognize the deceptions of Satan that can lead us into apostasy.

During the early years of the Church, some members were deceived by Satan and led into apostasy, or rebellion against God. A few members who apostatized became enemies of the Church and contributed to the persecutions of the Saints in Ohio and Missouri. As members of the Church today, we must be faithful and watchful so we are not deceived.

•Read D&C 50:2-3 and 2 Nephi 2:18, 27. Why does Satan want to deceive us? What are some of the ways in which Satan tries to deceive us and lead us into apostasy?

Not recognizing the prophet as the source of revelation for the Church

Some members are deceived by false prophets. The following account shows how several early Saints were temporarily deceived by false revelations.

In 1830, **Hiram Page**, one of the Eight Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, possessed a stone through which he claimed to receive revelations about the building of Zion and the order of the Church. Oliver Cowdery, the Whitmer's, and others believed these claims. However, the Prophet Joseph Smith said the claims "were entirely at variance with the order of God's house, as laid down in the New Testament, as well as in our late revelations" (History of the Church, 1:110).

The Prophet prayed about the matter and received a revelation in which the Lord made clear that only the President of the Church has the right to receive revelations for the Church (D&C 28). The Lord instructed Oliver Cowdery to tell Hiram Page that the revelations that came through the stone were from Satan (D&C 28:11). After hearing the Lord's instructions, "Brother Page, as well as the whole Church who were present, renounced the said stone, and all things connected therewith" (History of the Church, 1:115).

Pride

Some members are deceived because of their pride. The following story illustrates how pride led **Thomas B. Marsh**, who was President of the Quorum of the Twelve, and his wife, Elizabeth, into apostasy.

While living in Far West, Missouri, Sister Marsh and Sister Harris decided to exchange milk so they could each make a larger cheese than they otherwise could. They agreed to send each other both the milk and the cream from their cows. But Sister Marsh saved a pint of cream from each cow and sent Sister Harris the milk without the cream.

A quarrel arose, and the matter was referred to the bishop. When he determined that Sister Marsh had violated her agreement, she and her husband were upset and appealed the matter to the high council and then to the First Presidency. Each council approved the original decision that Sister Marsh had been in error.

Thomas B. Marsh declared that he would sustain the character of his wife. Soon afterward, he turned against the Church and went before a government official to declare that the Latter-day Saints were hostile toward the state of Missouri. (See George A. Smith, in Journal of Discourses, 3:283-84.)

President Gordon B. Hinckley said of this incident: "*What a very small and*

trivial thing—a little cream over which two women quarreled. But it led to, or at least was a factor in, Governor Boggs' cruel exterminating order which drove the Saints from the state of Missouri, with all of the terrible suffering and consequent death that followed. The man who should have settled this little quarrel, but who, rather, pursued it... lost his standing in the Church. He lost his testimony of the gospel" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 111; or Ensign, May 1984, 83).

After 19 years of darkness and bitterness, **Thomas B. Marsh** painfully made his way to the Salt Lake Valley and asked Brigham Young to forgive him and permit his rebaptism into the Church. He wrote to Heber C. Kimball, First Counselor in the First Presidency: *"I began to awake to a sense of my situation; ... I know that I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight."* He then described the lesson he had learned: *"The Lord could get along very well without me and He has lost nothing by my falling out of the ranks; But O what have I lost?! Riches, greater riches than all this world or many planets like this could afford"* (quoted by James E. Faust, in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 6; or Ensign, May 1996, 7).

•What can we learn from this story? How have you seen pride lead people into deception and apostasy? What does the Lord promise to those who humble themselves before Him? (See D&C 112:2-3, 10; Ether 12:27. Note that D&C 112 is a revelation given to Thomas B. Marsh through the Prophet Joseph Smith.)

Being critical of leaders' imperfections

Some members are deceived because they become critical of Church leaders' imperfections. The following story illustrates how Simonds Ryder was deceived in this way.

Simonds Ryder was converted to the Church in 1831. Later he received a letter signed by the Prophet Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, informing him that it was the Lord's will, made manifest by the Spirit, that he preach the gospel. Both in the letter he received and in the official commission to preach, his name was spelled Rider instead of Ryder. Simonds Ryder *"thought if the 'Spirit' through which he had been called to preach could err in the matter of spelling his name, it might have erred in calling him to the ministry as well; or, in other words, he was led to doubt if he were called at all by the Spirit of God, because of the error in spelling his name!"* (History of the Church, 1:261). Simonds Ryder later apostatized from the Church.

•What can we learn from this story? How does being critical of our Church leaders make us more susceptible to deception?

Being offended

Some Church members become offended by the actions of other members and allow an offense to fester until they are led into apostasy. An example of this is illustrated in the following incident.

When the Kirtland Temple was completed, many Saints gathered for the dedication. The seats in the temple filled quickly, and many people were allowed to stand, but still not everyone could be accommodated inside the building. **Elder Frazier Eaton**, who had given \$700 for the building of the temple, arrived after it had been filled, so he was not allowed inside for the dedication. The dedication was repeated the next day for those who could not be accommodated the first day, but this did not satisfy Frazier Eaton, and he apostatized. (See George A. Smith, in Journal of Discourses, 11:9.)

•What can we learn from this story? How do we today allow ourselves to be offended by others? How can being offended lead to apostasy? How can we overcome feelings of being offended?

•Read D&C 64:8-11 and 82:1. Whom does the Lord require us to forgive? Why is it sometimes difficult to be forgiving? What are some of the consequences of not forgiving someone? What can we do to help us forgive someone whom we have not yet forgiven?

Rationalizing disobedience

Rationalizing is excusing or defending unacceptable behavior. It is looking for a way to ease our consciences for doing something we know is wrong.

•How is rationalization a form of deception? How do we sometimes try to rationalize our behavior? Why is this dangerous? How can we recognize and overcome rationalization?

Accepting the false teachings of the world

•What are some of the false teachings of the world that can deceive members and lead them into apostasy? (Examples could include the false ideas that the commandments of God are too restrictive, that immorality is acceptable, and that material possessions are more important than spiritual things.)

Presiding Bishop H. David Burton taught: *"One of [Satan's] insidious strategies is to progressively soften our senses regarding what is right and wrong. Satan would have us convinced that it is fashionable to lie and cheat. He encourages us to view pornography by suggesting that it prepares us for the real world. He*

would have us believe that immorality is an attractive way of life and that obedience to the commandments of our Father in Heaven is old-fashioned. Satan constantly bombards us with deceptive propaganda desirably packaged and carefully disguised" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 60; or Ensign, May 1993, 46).

2. We can remain valiant in our testimonies and avoid deception.

The Lord has given us many blessings and commandments to help us remain valiant in our testimonies and avoid being deceived.

- What can we do to keep ourselves from being deceived and led into apostasy?

We can know clearly whom the Lord has called to lead the Church

- During the early years of the Church, many people claimed to receive revelations to guide the Church or correct the Prophet Joseph Smith. What did the Lord reveal in response to these claims? (See D&C 28:2, 6-7; 43:1-3. Point out that D&C 28 was revealed when Hiram Page claimed to receive revelations for the entire Church, and D&C 43 was revealed when others made similar claims.)

- Who receives revelations and commandments for the entire Church today? **President Joseph F. Smith** and his counselors in the First Presidency taught: *"The Lord has ... appointed one man at a time on the earth to hold the keys of revelation to the entire body of the Church in all its organizations, authorities, ordinances and doctrines. The spirit of revelation is bestowed upon all its members for the benefit and enlightenment of each individual receiving its inspiration, and according to the sphere in which he or she is called to labor. But for the entire Church, he who stands at the head is alone appointed to receive revelations by way of commandment and as the end of controversy"* (in James R. Clark, comp., Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 6 vols. [1965-75], 4:270).

- How can we avoid being deceived by those who claim falsely to have received revelation for the Church? (See D&C 43:4-7.)

- Read D&C 26:2 and 28:13. What is the principle of common consent? (See D&C 20:65; 42:11. It is the practice of showing that we are willing to sustain those who are called to serve in the Church, usually by raising our right hands.) How can the principle of common consent protect us from being deceived? (It allows us to know who has been called to preside and administer in the Church, thus keeping us from being deceived by the claims of those who have not been properly called.)

Display a chart of current General Authorities (see "Preparation," item 3). Emphasize the blessing we have of sustaining these leaders and following their counsel.

We should study the scriptures and the doctrines of the Church

- Read D&C 1:37 and 33:16. Throughout the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord teaches the importance of studying the scriptures. How can studying the scriptures and the words of latter-day prophets help us avoid being deceived?

- a. We can better discern the truthfulness of ideas by comparing them with the truths we learn from the scriptures and our current leaders. **President Harold B. Lee** taught: *"If [someone] writes something or speaks something that goes beyond anything that you can find in the standard Church works, unless that one be the prophet, seer, and revelator—please note that one exception—you may immediately say, 'Well, that is his own idea.' And if he says something that contradicts what is found in the standard Church works, you may know by that same token that it is false"* (The Teachings of Harold B. Lee, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1996], 540-41).

- b. Scripture study strengthens our testimonies so we are less likely to become complacent in righteousness or to be influenced by false doctrine. **President Lee** taught, *"If we're not reading the scriptures daily, our testimonies are growing thinner, our spirituality isn't increasing in depth"* (The Teachings of Harold B. Lee, 152).

- How has studying the scriptures protected you from being deceived? We should recognize that the things of God will always edify us. The **Prophet Joseph Smith** explained that soon after the Saints were settled in Kirtland, *"many false spirits were introduced, many strange visions were seen, and wild, enthusiastic notions were entertained; men ran out of doors under the influence of this spirit, and some of them got upon the stumps of trees and shouted, and all kinds of extravagances were entered into by them; ... many ridiculous things were entered into, calculated to bring disgrace upon the Church of God, to cause the Spirit of God to be withdrawn"* (History of the Church, 4:580). Concerned by these excessive spiritual displays, the Prophet inquired of the Lord. The revelation in D&C 50 is the Lord's response.

- Read D&C 50:17-24. What do these verses teach about how we can discern the things of God from the things of Satan? (The things of God will edify us by enlightening our minds and helping us grow spiritually. They make us want to

follow the Savior and improve our lives. The things of Satan will do the opposite.)

President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: *"There is no saying of greater truth than 'that which doth not edify is not of God.' And that which is not of God is darkness, it matters not whether it comes in the guise of religion, ethics, philosophy or revelation. No revelation from God will fail to edify"* (Church History and Modern Revelation, 2 vols. [1953], 1:201-2).

We should apply the Lord's pattern for protecting ourselves from being deceived. The Lord revealed D&C 52 the day after a conference in Kirtland. In this revelation He provides a pattern by which we can avoid being deceived.

•Read D&C 52:14-19. According to these verses, what are the characteristics of teachers who are "of God"? How can the pattern that is given in this passage help us avoid being deceived?

Conclusion: Review the deceptions of Satan that can lead to apostasy. Review the counsel the Lord has given for protecting ourselves from deception. As we follow this counsel, the Spirit of the Lord will keep us in the way of truth.

Additional Teaching Ideas: Additional counsel about how to strengthen ourselves against apostasy. **Elder Carlos E. Asay** of the Seventy specified the following things we can do to strengthen ourselves against apostasy:

"1. Avoid those who would tear down your faith....

"2. Keep the commandments... .

"3. Follow the living prophets... .

"4. Do not contend or debate over points of doctrine. [See 3 Nephi 11:29.]

"5. Search the scriptures....

"6. Do not be swayed or diverted from the mission of the Church....

"7. Pray for your enemies....

"8. Practice 'pure religion.' [See James 1:27 and Alma 1:30.] ...

"9. Remember that there may be many questions for which we have no answers and that some things have to be accepted simply on faith" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1981, 93-94; or Ensign, Nov. 1981, 67-68).

Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual, Religion 324-325, Published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, (See individual D & C Sections).

"Thou Shalt Not Command Him Who Is at Thy Head"

Section 28

Historical Background

The Church, having been organized only a few short months, faced one of its first major problems at the time this revelation was given in September 1830: Who is entitled to receive revelation for the Church? The question arose because Hiram Page had found a stone through which he claimed to be receiving revelation.

Many of the early converts came from a congregationalist background, that is, from churches in which anyone had the right to proclaim doctrine if the rest of the congregation concurred. Thus, it seemed natural to them to respond to Hiram Page's revelation as valid. But as a result of this revelation, the Saints in New York understood that only one could receive revelation from the Lord for the whole Church. The new converts in Kirtland also had to learn this same lesson (see D&C 43).

Newel Knight, who was an eyewitness to these events, recorded this account: "After arranging my affairs at home, I again set out for Fayette, to attend our second conference, which had been appointed to be held at Father Whitmer's where Joseph then resided. On my arrival I found Brother Joseph in great distress of mind on account of Hyrum Page, who had managed to get up some dissension of feeling among the brethren by giving revelations concerning the government of the Church and other matters, which he claimed to have received through the medium of a stone he possessed. He had quite a roll of papers full of these revelations, and many in the Church were led astray by them. Even Oliver Cowdery and the Whitmer family had given heed to them, although they were in contradiction to the New Testament and the revelations of these last days. Here was a chance for Satan to work among the little flock, and he sought by this means to accomplish what persecution failed to do. Joseph was perplexed and scarcely knew how to meet this new exigency. That night I occupied the same room that he did and the greater part of the night was spent in prayer and supplication. After much labor with these brethren they were convinced of their error, and confessed the same, renouncing the revelations as not being of God, but acknowledged that Satan had conspired to overthrow their belief in the true plan of salvation. In consequence of these things Joseph enquired of the Lord before conference commenced and received the revelation published on page 140 of the Doctrine and Covenants [section 28], wherein God explicitly states His mind and will concerning the receiving of revelations.

"Conference having assembled, the first thing done was to consider the subject of the stone in connection with Hyrum Page, and after considerable investigation and discussion, Brother Page and all the members of the Church present renounced the stone, and the revelations connected with it, much to our joy and satisfaction." (Journal History, 26 Sept. 1830.)

Notes and Commentary

D&C 28:1. Why Did the Lord Tell the Church to Listen to Oliver Cowdery?

Oliver Cowdery was at this time the second elder of the Church (see D&C 20:3), just as the Saints were to listen to the counsel of all the General Authorities, so were they admonished to heed the words of Oliver Cowdery.

D&C 28:2-3. In What Way Did Hiram Page Violate the True Order of Divine Guidance for the Church?

The Prophet taught in 1833 that "it is contrary to the economy of God for any member of the Church, or any one, to receive instructions for those in authority, higher than themselves; therefore you will see the impropriety of giving heed to them; but if any person have a vision or a visitation from a heavenly messenger, it must be for his own benefit and instruction; for the fundamental principles, government, and doctrine of the Church are vested in the keys of the kingdom." (History of the Church, 1:338.)

An official statement by the First Presidency of the Church in 1913 gave additional illumination to this principle: "From the days of Hiram Page (Doc. and Cov., Sec. 28), at different periods there have been manifestations from delusive spirits to members of the Church. Sometimes these have come to the men and women who because of transgression became easy prey to the Arch Deceiver. At other times people who pride themselves on their strict observance of the rules and ordinances and ceremonies of the Church are led astray by false spirits, who exercise an influence so imitative of that which proceeds from a Divine source that even these persons, who think they are 'the very elect,' find it difficult to discern the essential difference. Satan himself has transformed himself to be apparently 'an angel of light.'

"When visions, dreams, tongues, prophecy, impressions or any extraordinary gift or inspiration, convey something out of harmony with the accepted revelations of the Church or contrary to the decisions of its constituted authorities, Latter-day Saints may know that it is not of God, no matter how plausible it may appear. Also, they should understand that directions for the guidance of the Church will come, by revelation, through the head. All faithful members are entitled to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for themselves, their families, and for those over whom they are appointed and ordained to preside. But anything at discord with that which comes from God through the head of the Church is not to be received as authoritative or reliable. In secular as well as spiritual affairs, Saints may receive Divine guidance and revelation affecting themselves, but this does not convey

authority to direct others, and is not to be accepted when contrary to Church covenants, doctrine or discipline, or to known facts, demonstrated truths, or good common sense....

"Be not led by any spirit or influence that discredits established authority and contradicts true scientific principles and discoveries, or leads away from the direct revelations of God for the government of the Church. The Holy Ghost does not contradict its own revealings. Truth is always harmonious with itself. Piety is often the cloak of error. The counsels of the Lord through the channel he has appointed will be followed with safety, therefore, O! ye Latter-day Saints, profit by these words of warning." (Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, and Charles W. Penrose, "A Warning Voice," Improvement Era, Sept. 1913, pp. 1148-49.)

Oliver Cowdery was told by the Lord that he might "not write by way of commandment, but by wisdom" (D&C 28:5). In other words, the Lord was telling Oliver that while he might give counsel and advice to the Saints, he was not to establish Church doctrine or revelation. That was the office of the prophet only.

D&C 28:5-6. "Thou Shalt Not Command Him Who Is at Thy Head"

President Joseph Fielding Smith explained that "it was very necessary that Oliver Cowdery should receive this admonition, for he was inclined to take issue with the Prophet even in regard to matters of revelation. Much good came out of this unpleasant incident, for the members were taught that there was order in the Church and only one appointed to receive commandments and revelations for their guidance, and he was the one God had called. The members at that time were largely excusable for falling into this error, because they had but recently come into the Church and had to be taught in all things pertaining to the kingdom of God and its government. They did not know that it was wrong for a man other than the Prophet to claim to be the spokesman for the Almighty, and this revelation taught them that confusion would result from such a course, and that Joseph Smith held the keys of revelation until another was appointed to succeed him." (Church History and Modern Revelation, 1:135-36.)

D&C 28:8-16. Oliver Cowdery Is Called on a Mission to the Lamanites

"The Lamanite mission was a very important movement of the young but vigorous Church. Oliver Cowdery was the first-appointed member of the party. Peter Whitmer, Jr., was added by Revelation (Sec. 30); and then Parley P. Pratt and Ziba Peterson (Sec. 32). Soon after the Conference the little party set out on the perilous journey of about 1,500 miles. They started on foot, trusting in the Lord to open the way. Near Buffalo they visited the Catteraugus Indians and left the Book of

Mormon with them. Then they proceeded to Kirtland, Ohio. Here they visited Sidney Rigdon, then a popular Campbellite minister. He and some of his friends joined the Church. Night and day, for some time, the missionaries were teaching the people in Kirtland and vicinity. After having ordained Rigdon, Isaac Morley, John Murdock, Lyman Wight and others, to the ministry, the missionaries left for the West. Near Sandusky they visited the Wyandot tribe and preached the gospel. In Cincinnati and St. Louis they met with very little success. At the latter place their progress was impeded by heavy snowstorms. With the opening of the New Year, 1831, they continued their journey, traveling on foot 300 miles over prairies, without shelter and fire, living on frozen corn, bread and raw pork. At length they reached Independence, Mo., on the extreme western frontier of the State. They had traveled four months and suffered untold hardships; they had preached to two Indian nations and to thousands of white people, and organized several strong branches of the Church.

"After having rested a little at Independence, three of the brethren crossed the frontier and visited the Shawnee Indians. Then they went among the Delawares. These manifested a great deal of interest in the Book of Mormon. Therefore the jealousy of ministers was aroused and these prevailed upon the Indian agents to expel the missionaries from the Indian country. They, accordingly, returned to Jackson county, where they labored for some time with encouraging success." (Smith and Sjodahl, Commentary, p. 144.)

D&C 28:9. "It Shall Be Given Hereafter"

Through the revelation of Moses and Enoch received by Joseph Smith, the early Saints learned that Zion was to be established again on the earth (see Moses 7:62). It was only natural that the Saints would inquire about its location.

"It is not improbable that some of the pseudo revelations of Hiram Page related to this very subject [the location of Zion]. The Saints were full of enthusiasm, looking for the immediate fulfilment of the prophecies. The Lord now made it known that the locality of that holy city had not yet been revealed, but that it might be looked for 'on the borders by the Lamanites.' Further revelation on this subject would come later (Sec. 57:2, 3)." (Smith and Sjodahl, Commentary, p. 142.)

By "Lamanites" Joseph Smith had reference to the Indians, and to go out to the "borders by the Lamanites" meant to go to the frontier (D&C 28:9). The natural way to travel would be by the most frequently traveled roads to the most populous area. Even at that, Independence was a town that was organized only about four years before the missionaries arrived.

D&C 28:12. Church Covenants

The Church covenants mentioned here include the articles and covenants of the Church found in section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants. In that revelation the Lord specified who presided over the Church (see D&C 20:2-3) and outlined the duties of all the other members and priesthood holders (see D&C 20:38-71). Hiram Page's claim that he received revelation for the whole Church was out of harmony with the teachings of that section of the Doctrine and Covenants. Linked with this teaching is the doctrine of common consent (explained in D&C 20:63-67), which principle, according to Doctrine and Covenants 28:13, had been violated by Hiram Page in preaching that the revelations he had received were to be obeyed by all the members of the Church.

"The Lord Shall Utter His Voice out of Heaven" Section 43

Historical Background

On 6 April 1830 the Lord instructed the Saints about the channel through which revelation would come to build Zion. He said, speaking of the President of the Church, "Him have I inspired to move the cause of Zion in mighty power" (D&C 21:7). This instruction was difficult for some of the Saints to follow. Many had come from religious backgrounds that permitted any member of the congregation to proclaim doctrine for the entire assembly. Yet on the day the Church was organized, the Lord taught the principle that only one person has the right to receive revelation for the entire Church. Even by September 1830 the Saints had not fully learned this lesson, for many believed in the revelations of Hiram Page. In February 1831 it became necessary for the Lord to further instruct the Saints on this matter. Section 43 was given in response to the activity of a Mrs. Hubble, who "came making great pretensions of revealing commandments, laws and other curious matters" (History of the Church, 1:154). John Whitmer recorded the following about Mrs. Hubble: "She professed to be a prophetess of the Lord, and professed to have many revelations, and knew the Book of Mormon was true, and that she should become a teacher in the church of Christ. She appeared to be very sanctimonious and deceived some who were not able to detect her in her hypocrisy; others, however, had the spirit of discernment and her follies and abominations were manifest." (History of the Church, 1:154n.)

Mrs. Hubble was one of many who falsely claimed revelations to guide the Church or to correct the Prophet. In a discourse in Ogden, Utah, Elder George A. Smith gave several examples of the problem and said: "There was a prevalent spirit all through the early history of this church, which prompted the Elders to suppose

that they knew more than the Prophet. Elders would tell you that the Prophet was going wrong." (In Journal of Discourses, 11:7.) Many members became confused and bewildered by the different claims. Under these circumstances the Prophet went to the Lord for guidance and received the revelation recorded as Doctrine and Covenants 43.

Notes and Commentary

D&C 43:7. How Can One Avoid Being Deceived by False Prophets?

If we take the Holy Spirit as our guide and if we study and follow the Lord's written word, then we will be on a course of safety. With this foundation we are prepared to discern true prophets from false prophets. The Lord has provided an additional guide to ensure that the Saints are not deceived. President Joseph F. Smith explained:

"It is not my business nor that of any other individual to rise up as a revelator, as a prophet, as a seer, as an inspired man, to give revelation for the guidance of the Church, or to assume to dictate to the presiding authorities of the Church.... We can accept nothing as authoritative but that which comes directly through the appointed channel, the constituted organizations of the Priesthood, which is the channel that God has appointed through which to make known His mind and will to the world..... the moment that individuals look to any other source, that moment they throw themselves open to the seductive influences of Satan, and render themselves liable to become servants of the devil; they lose sight of the true order through which the blessings of the Priesthood are to be enjoyed; they step outside of the pale of the kingdom of God, and are on dangerous ground. Whenever you see a man rise up claiming to have received direct revelation from the Lord to the Church, independent of the order and channel of the Priesthood, you may set him down as an impostor." (In Journal of Discourses, 24:188-90.)

D&C 43:9. How Does "Binding" Oneself by Covenants Help One Become Holy?

There is tremendous value in making commitments to one another and to the Lord. By entering into covenants or making commitments with others, we bind our self by our own integrity to act in a certain way. This arrangement becomes a fortification against the powers of opposition. In other words, covenants bring a sense of responsibility, which in turn becomes a power of reinforcement for positive action and a deterrent to slothfulness. Covenant making can help us break away from routines or habits of the past as we clearly identify a course to pursue and then establish a means of accountability by making the commitment known

to others. There are always positive consequences for keeping divine covenants and negative consequences for breaking them. When we make commitments based on a correct understanding of consequences, we then unify the forces within us and secure the blessings of heaven. The Lord, seeing our willingness to make commitments, gives us His Spirit, which strengthens us to do what we have committed to do.

D&C 43:12-14. By Supporting Joseph Smith, the Saints Could Obtain the Glories and Mysteries of the Kingdom

The Saints were counseled that if they desired to receive the mysteries and glories of the kingdom, they should provide the temporal necessities for Joseph Smith so he could spend his time doing what only he could do—fulfilling his prophetic calling. The Prophet was told that "the greatest blessings which God had to bestow should be given to those who contributed to the support of his family while he was translating the fulness of the Scriptures" (Teachings, p. 9).

Though the Saints were somewhat helpful, Joseph did not receive enough to support his family, despite several attempts by Church leaders to get members to contribute (see History of the Church, 4:136-37, 164, 187, 493, 517). The process of translation was slowed, and efforts to prepare a manuscript for press were delayed. As a result he was unable to finish his translation, even though the Lord had instructed that it be published (see D&C 94:10; 104:58-59; 124:89). The neglect by the early Saints of this counsel was very costly in knowledge and spiritual blessings.

D&C 43:15-16. The Gospel Can Be Taught Effectively Only through Power from on High

These verses contain important instructions from the Lord to those who are called to preach the gospel. Teachers in God's kingdom are not to teach from the doctrines and philosophies of the world but are to base their teachings on the revelations of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord promises an endowment of power to those who sanctify themselves. The Saints had the gift of the Holy Ghost and the priesthood, and they would soon receive the endowment that was to be given in holy temples.

D&C 43:17-25. How Is God's Warning Voice Being Sounded Today?

The lightnings spoken of in verse 22 do not actually speak in the sense of talking, but they will be as much a warning to the inhabitants of the earth as is the warning

given by the missionaries. According to verse 25, the Lord uses all kinds of natural phenomena, along with the efforts of His Church leaders, missionaries, angels, and even His own voice, to convince the people of the earth to repent and prepare for the future.

Speaking of this method of warning the world, President Brigham Young said: "Do you think there is calamity abroad now among the people? Not much. All we have yet heard and all we have experienced is scarcely a preface to the sermon that is going to be preached. When the testimony of the elders ceases to be given, and the Lord says to them, 'Come home; I will now preach my own sermons to the nations of the earth,' all you now know can scarcely be called a preface to the sermon that will be preached with fire and sword, tempests, earthquakes, hail, rain, thunders and lightnings, and fearful destruction.... You will hear of magnificent cities, now idolized by the people, sinking in the earth, entombing the inhabitants. The sea will heave itself beyond its bounds, engulfing mighty cities. Famine will spread over the nations." (In Journal of Discourses, 8:123; see also D&C 88:88-92.)

In 1980, a few weeks after the eruption of Mount Saint Helens, a volcano in the Western United States, the following editorial appeared in the Church News: "A series of most unusual events happened within the past few weeks. Of course the most startling was the Mt. St. Helens eruption, with all its damage and toll of human life.

"But while it was belching forth, a series of tornadoes swept through the middle section of the United States. More than 900 'freak' storms struck America within that month. In a single day 50 tornadoes were counted in six states. The very next day 24 more tornadoes struck Iowa and Nebraska. And during this same period earthquakes shook California....

"It is important that we look for significance in these upheavals. Can it be that they are signs of the times? Can it be that the Lord is speaking ... by these frightful disasters?

"He said that in the latter days, He would declare His testimony by means of tempests, floods, earthquakes and epidemics. He didn't mention volcanoes, but surely they are within His realm as much as earthquakes. Did He force Mt. St. Helens into eruption as a warning ... to repent and recognize Him?

"We have a tendency to forget our pains quickly, even as does a mother when her child is born. Little is said even now about the Arizona floods, although the debris and broken bridges remain.

"Even the volcano is off the front pages. And the 50 tornadoes in one day? They got only two inches of space on the front page as part of a news summary. Not so much as a headline was given them!

"It is possible to become so hardened that we brush aside the warning voice, and even forget our sufferings. Those who lost their homes and loved ones won't easily forget, though, even if the general public does.

"Must the Lord speak in louder tones? Must He send greater disasters before we listen to His warning voice?

"How much does it take to waken us to a realization that God is real, that there is an end to His patience, and that the only true security in these troubled times is through obedience to the Most High? Why fly in the face of Providence?" (Church News, 21 June 1980, p. 12.)

D&C 43:31. How Will Satan Be Bound During the Millennium?

In speaking of the millennial era, Nephi said that "because of the righteousness of his [the Lord's] people, Satan has no power; wherefore, he cannot be loosed for the space of many years; for he hath no power over the hearts of the people, for they dwell in righteousness, and the Holy One of Israel reignite" (1 Nephi 22:26).

President Joseph Fielding Smith taught concerning the binding of Satan: "There are many among us who teach that the binding of Satan will be merely the binding which those dwelling on the earth will place upon him by their refusal to hear his entices. This is not so. He will not have the privilege during that period of time to tempt any man. (D. & C. 101:28.)" (Church History and Modern Revelation, 1:192.)

These two statements at first may seem to be at variance, but in reality they are not. It is true that the result of the righteousness of the Saints is that Satan cannot exert power over them. The restrictions that will come upon Satan will be a result of two important actions by the Lord: (1) He will destroy telestial wickedness from the earth at His Second Coming; and (2) He will reward the righteous by pouring out His Spirit on them to such an extent that Satan's power will be overwhelmed. Satan will not have the power to tempt or negatively influence the Lord's people. Both the righteousness of the Saints and the operation of the Lord's power are necessary to bind Satan: if the Saints do not give heed to God's word, He will not give them His Spirit. And without the Spirit, they on their own cannot withstand the force of the adversary.

President George Q. Cannon explained: "We talk about Satan being bound. Satan will be bound by the power of God; but he will be bound also by the determination of the people of God not to listen to him, not to be governed by him. The Lord will not bind him and take his power from the earth while there are men and women willing to be governed by him. That is contrary to the plan of salvation. To deprive men of their agency is contrary to the purposes of our God....

"Satan only gains power over man through man's exercise of his own agency; and when Satan shall be bound, as the Lord says he will be for a thousand years, one of the great powers that will help bring this to pass will be man's agency. The Lord has never forced men against their will to obey Him. He never will do so. If Satan, therefore, has power with man, it is because man yields to his influence....

"The time is not far distant when great judgments will be poured out upon the wicked inhabitants of the earth. Every Prophet who has looked forward to our day has seen and predicted that the wicked would be destroyed. Their destruction means the destruction of Satan's power. The righteous will be left, and because of their righteousness the Lord will have mercy upon them; they, exercising their agency in the right direction, will bring down His blessings upon them to such an extent that Satan will be bound." (Gospel Truth, 1:86-87; see also 2 Nephi 30:18; Ether 8:26.)

D&C 43:33. "The Wicked Shall Go Away into Unquenchable Fire"

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "some shall rise to the damnation of their own filthiness, which is as exquisite a torment as the lake of fire and brimstone" (Teachings, p. 361). Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained:

"The nature of burning brimstone [sulfur] is such that it perfectly symbolized to the prophetic mind the eternal torment of the damned. Accordingly we read that the wicked are 'tormented with fire and brimstone' (Rev. 14:9-11; 19:20; 20:10), or in other words that 'their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever and has no end.' (2 Ne. 9:16; Alma 12:17.) This burning scene, a horrifying 'lake of fire and brimstone,' symbolizes 'endless torment' (2 Ne. 9:19, 26; 28:23; Jac. 6:10; Alma 14:14; D. & C. 76:36); those who find place therein are subject to the second death. (Jac. 3:11; D. & C. 63:17.) They suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. (D. & C. 29:28; 43:33; 76:44, 105.)" (Mormon Doctrine, pp. 280-81.)

D&C 43:34. What Are the "Solemnities of Eternity"?

The word solemnity means something very serious or sublimely important. The Lord tells the members of the Church to let the serious things of eternity their covenants and the great blessings that will be given the faithful-rest upon their minds. What changes could come into the lives of mortal men and women if they continually let the eternal perspective guide them!

"That Which Doth Not Edify Is Not of God" Section 50

Historical Background

During all dispensations when the gospel has been on the earth, Satan has devised ways to counterfeit revelation. The Prophet Joseph Smith observed: "Soon after the Gospel was established in Kirtland, and during the absence of the authorities of the Church, many false spirits were introduced, many strange visions were seen, and wild, enthusiastic notions were entertained: men ran out of doors under the influence of this spirit, and some of them got upon the stumps of trees and shouted, and all kinds of extravagances were entered into by them; one man pursued a ball that he said he saw flying in the air, until he came to a precipice, when he jumped into the top of a tree, which saved his life; and many ridiculous things were entered into, calculated to bring disgrace upon the Church of God, to cause the Spirit of God to be withdrawn, and to uproot and destroy those glorious principles which had been developed for the salvation of the human family." (History of the Church, 4:580.)

John Whitmer wrote: "Some had visions and could not tell what they saw, some would fancy to themselves that they had the sword of Laban, and would wield it as expert as a light dragoon; some would act like an Indian in the act of scalping; some would slide or scoot on the floor with the rapidity of a serpent, which they termed sailing in the boat to the Lamanites, preaching the gospel. And many other vain and foolish maneuvers that are unseemingly and unprofitable to mention. Thus the devil blinded the eyes of some good and honest disciples. I write these things to show how ignorant and undiscerning children are, and how easy mankind is led astray, notwithstanding the things of God that are written concerning his kingdom." ("Church History," Journal of History, Jan. 1908, p. 55.) Elder Parley P. Pratt was also a witness to these unusual operations: "All these things were new and strange to me, and had originated in the Church during the absence, and previous to the arrival of President Joseph Smith from New York.

"Feeling our weakness and inexperience, and lest we should err in judgment concerning the spiritual phenomena, myself, John Murdock, and several other

D&C 50:2-9. Satan Seeks to Deceive Mankind through False Manifestations

The Prophet Joseph Smith observed: "The devil has great power to deceive; he will so transform things as to make one gape at those who are doing the will of God" (Teachings, p. 227). Latter-day Saints must observe the Lord's counsel in order to escape Satan's deceptions: "Let every man beware lest he do that which is not in truth and righteousness before me" (D&C 50:9).

President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: "From the time of the fall of man until now Satan and his followers who were cast out of heaven, have been deceiving men. Today, as in the beginning, Lucifer is saying, 'I am also a son of God ... believe it or not,' and men today believe not for the same reason that they refused to believe in the beginning. 'Some commandments are of men,' so the Savior informed Joseph Smith... (Sec. 46:7.) Some commandments are of devils, and these are also made manifest largely through the activities of men... These false spirits make themselves manifest in various ways and in all communities. Some of the most startling and prevalent forms of false manifestations are in the false gifts of tongues, and in religious meetings particularly among some sects where the worshipers fall in fits, shout, sing and pray in disorderly fashion, sometimes frothing at the mouth and their bodies partaking of unnatural contortions." (Church History and Modern Revelation, 1:200.)

D&C 50:10-12. "Let Us Reason Even As a Man"

The Lord sometimes reasons with us in the same way we reason with each other. His purpose in reasoning with us is the same as His reason for speaking to us in our own language: He wants them to "come to understanding" (D&C 1:24; see also Isaiah 1:18).

Elders, went to Joseph Smith, and asked him to inquire of the Lord concerning these spirits or manifestations." (Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt, pp. 61-62.)
Section 50 was the response to that inquiry.

Notes and Commentary

D&C 50:13-21. How Can One Discern and Unmask Evil Spirits?

Some of the early Saints had fallen victim to excessive spiritual displays, "receiving them to be of God" (D&C 50:15). The Lord indicated that these displays are not justified. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained: "One great evil is, that men are ignorant of the nature of spirits; their power, laws, government, intelligence, etc., and imagine that when there is anything like power, revelation,

or vision manifested, that it must be of God..... who can drag into daylight and develop the hidden mysteries of the false spirits that so frequently are made manifest among the Latter-day Saints? We answer that no man can do this without the Priesthood, and having a knowledge of the laws by which spirits are governed; for as 'no man knows the things of God,' but by the Spirit of God, so no man knows the spirit of the devil, and his power and influence, but by possessing intelligence which is more than human, and having unfolded through the medium of the Priesthood the mysterious operations of his devices; without knowing the angelic form, the sanctified look and gesture, and the zeal that is frequently manifested by him for the glory of God, together with the prophetic spirit, the gracious influence, the godly appearance, and the holy garb, which are so characteristic of his proceedings and his mysterious windings.

"A man must have the discerning of spirits before he can drag into daylight this hellish influence and unfold it unto the world in all its soul-destroying, diabolical, and horrid colors.... .. the great difficulty lies in the ignorance of the nature of spirits, of the laws by which they are governed, and the signs by which they may be known; ... it requires the Spirit of God to know the things of God; and the spirit of the devil can only be unmasked through that medium." (History of the Church, 4:572-74; see also Notes and Commentary for D&C 129.)

D&C 50:22-24. How Can We Tell "That Which Is of God" from That Which Is of Satan?

The things of God edify: they spiritually support and lift us toward a better life. They bring us closer to our Father in Heaven. The things of Satan do the opposite. No spiritual growth occurs, no intelligence is communicated, we are not edified. The Prophet Joseph Smith observed: "Others frequently possess a spirit that will cause them to lie down, and during its operation, animation is frequently entirely suspended; they consider it to be the power of God, and a glorious manifestation from God—a manifestation of what? Is there any intelligence communicated? Are the curtains of heaven withdrawn, or the purposes of God developed? Have they seen and conversed with an angel—or have the glories of futurity burst upon their view? No! but their body has been inanimate, the operation of their spirit suspended, and all the intelligence that can be obtained from them when they arise, is a shout of 'glory,' or 'hallelujah,' or some incoherent expression; but they have had 'the power.'

"The Shaker will whirl around on his heel, impelled by a supernatural agency or spirit, and think that he is governed by the Spirit of God; and the Jumper will jump and enter into all kinds of extravagances. A Primitive Methodist will shout under the influence of that spirit, until he will rend the heavens with his cries; while the

Quakers (or Friends) moved as they think, by the Spirit of God, will sit still and say nothing. Is God the author of all this? If not of all of it, which does He recognize? Surely, such a heterogeneous mass of confusion never can enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Teachings, pp. 203-4.)

President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: "There is no saying of greater truth than 'that which cloth not edify is not of God.' And that which is not of God is darkness, it matters not whether it comes in the guise of religion, ethics, philosophy or revelation. No revelation from God will fail to edify." (Church History and Modern Revelation, 1:201-2.)

D&C 50:25-28. How Can Man Become "Possessor of All Things"?

Those who strive to keep the Lord's commandments are made joint heirs with Jesus Christ and inherit all that the Father has (see Romans 8:17; D&C 84:38). But "no man is possessor of all things except he be purified and cleansed from all sin" (D&C 50:28). Keeping all the commandments of God is the key to eternal life.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: "We believe that God condescended to speak from the heavens and declare His will concerning the human family, to give them just and holy laws, to regulate their conduct, and guide them in a direct way, that in due time He might take them to Himself, and make them joint heirs with His Son...

"Here then, we have this part of our subject immediately before us for consideration: God has in reserve a time, or period appointed in His own bosom, when He will bring all His subjects, who have obeyed His voice and kept His commandments, into His celestial rest. This rest is of such perfection and glory, that man has need of a preparation before he can, according to the laws of that kingdom, enter it and enjoy its blessings. This being the fact, God has given certain laws to the human family, which, if observed, are sufficient to prepare them to inherit this rest." (Teachings, pp. 53-54.)

D&C 50:29-30. "It Shall Be Given You What You Shall Ask"

Those who are clean before the Lord may pray with confidence and expect to receive righteous answers to their prayers. That which they ask, if expedient in the Lord's mind, will be given (see D&C 88:64). "But know this, it shall be given you what you shall ask" (D&C 50:30). We should pray for what is reasonable and according to the mind and will of the Lord. If we are righteous, we will enjoy God's spirit, and it will be "given unto [us] what [we] should pray," because we will be "filled with desire" (3 Nephi 19:24). We will desire what the Lord wants us to have, and that will be the subject of our prayers.

D&C 50:31-35. A Key to Discernment

When we are confronted by a spirit that we cannot understand, or by someone who has great spiritual power but whose claims seem in doubt, we must ask God in the name of Jesus if it is a good or an evil spirit. If prayer reveals that such a person is not of God, "power over that spirit" can come only from God. We cannot control or conquer evil on our own power, but God can give us sufficient power to do so (see D&C 50:32). We must then give credit to the Lord (see v. 34). The Lord teaches us that "power" is available "to overcome all things not ordained" of God (v. 35).

D&C 50:40-43. "And None of Them That My Father Hath Given Me Shall Be Lost"

Elder Marriner W. Merrill applied these words to the family: "When we [meet our obligations in the Church and] have fellowship with each other, we have fellowship with the Spirit of the Lord, which will direct us in all our ways, and we will be preserved in the truth with our families. Some of our families perhaps are wayward. They do not do as we would like them to do. Is not this the case in many families? There are sons and daughters whose course does not give satisfaction to their fathers and mothers. What shall we do about it? Do the very best we can, but see to it that we have not been the cause of their lack of integrity in the work of the Lord. I believe through our faithfulness and our entreaties with the Lord we may be the means not only of saving ourselves, but those the Lord has entrusted to us as sons and daughters. The Lord is merciful and He will hear our prayers and grant our desires through our integrity for him and his work. And peradventure, through our faithfulness, our children who are wayward and who perhaps have strayed away, will come back to the fold by and by, because the Lord will hear us in their behalf." (In Conference Report, Apr. 1900, p. 29.)

D&C 50:45. "The Day Cometh That You Shall ... See Me"

The promise that we can see the face of God is taught here and in several other places in the Doctrine and Covenants (see for example D&C 67:10; 88:68; 93:1). Elder Orson F. Whitney taught: "It is not given to every man to look upon the face of God as did Moses [Moses 1:11], as did Joseph Smith. One must be specially prepared before he can see what Joseph saw.... I do not expect the Lord to manifest Himself to me in the same way that He did to Joseph the Prophet. I expect Him to communicate with me through the gifts He has endowed me with, not through those with which He has endowed my brother or sister, unless they have the right to receive for me a message from Him. When the Lord speaks to me or to you, it will be in a method and manner justified by our preparation, our gifts, our powers;

for we have all been endowed in some degree." (In Conference Report, Apr. 1910, p. 60.)

"Let Them Go Two by Two "

Section 52

Historical Background

A gathering of the Church convened at Kirtland, Ohio, on 3 June 1831. So important was this conference that letters were sent to the missionaries calling them all to Kirtland (see D&C 44:1). Efforts were also made to bring the New York Saints to Ohio (see D&C 48:2-5).

During this conference a significant new office was conferred upon a number of the brethren, that of high priest in the Melchizedek Priesthood. The Prophet Joseph Smith received the spirit of prophecy and prophesied that John the Revelator was among the ten tribes preparing them to return from their long dispersion. (See History of the Church, 1:175-76). The Prophet recorded that "harmony prevailed" and "faith was strengthened" (History of the Church, 1:176). Many desired to obey the Lord's commandments but were uncertain about what specifically they could do. On the day following the conclusion of the conference the Prophet was given specific calls and instructions in what is now Doctrine and Covenants 52.

Notes and Commentary

D&C 52:2. How Often Were Conferences Held?

The Lord had commanded that conferences of the Church be held every three months or as often as the Saints assembled in conference decided (see D&C 20:61). Usually the leaders of the Church decided in one conference the date and place of the next. The Lord in this revelation designated Missouri as the location of the next conference.

D&C 52:3, 7-8, 22-32. One Purpose of This Revelation

One purpose of this revelation was to call certain brethren to travel as missionaries from Ohio to Missouri. Twenty-eight missionaries were called in this revelation; however, thirty actually went—one of the original twenty-eight did not go, and three more were called later (see D&C 53, 55-56).

D&C 52:9. The Standard by Which to Determine What Is Taught in the Church

In this revelation the Lord set a standard for missionaries and teachers: they should teach those things that He has revealed to His prophets and Apostles, that which is taught to them through the influence of the Holy Ghost. Many problems arise when people begin to offer their personal opinions as doctrines of the Church. In 1837 the Twelve Apostles wrote an epistle in which they warned: "Be careful that you teach not for the word of God the commandments of men, nor the doctrines of men, nor the ordinances of men, inasmuch as you are God's messengers. Study the word of God, and preach it and not your opinions, for no man's opinion is worth a straw. Advance no principle but what you can prove, for one scriptural proof is worth ten thousand opinions. We would moreover say, abide by that revelation which says 'Preach nothing but repentance to this generation,' and leave the further mysteries of the kingdom till God shall tell you to preach them, which is not now." (History of the Church, 3:395-96.)

Elder Bruce R. McConkie bore the following testimony: "The truth of all things is measured by the scriptures. That which harmonizes with them should be accepted; that which is contrary to their teachings, however plausible it may seem for the moment, will not endure and should be rejected." (Mormon Doctrine, p. 765.)

D&C 52:14-19. The Pattern by Which One Can Avoid Deception

A pattern is a representative sample of traits, acts, or other features characterizing an individual. In these verses the Lord indicates that one observable feature of those who are inspired of God is that they obey the ordinances of the gospel.

D&C 52:33. "And One Man Shall Not Build upon Another's Foundation"

"Special instructions were also given to others of the elders, commanding them to go forth two by two in the proclamation of the word of God by the way, to every congregation where they could get a hearing. Though the western frontier of Missouri was their destination, they were commanded to take different routes and not build on each other's foundation or travel in each other's track." (Cannon, Life of Joseph Smith, p. 116.)

D&C 52:39. Who Does the Lord Command to "Labor with Their Own Hands," and How Would Obedience to This Commandment Prevent Idolatry?

This instruction was given to those elders not assigned to go as missionaries to Missouri. These men were assigned to stay home and be the priesthood leaders for the Saints in Kirtland. By laboring with their own hands for their support, rather than being paid for their priesthood service, these brethren would help prevent

idolatry and priestcraft from springing up in the Church (see 2 Nephi 26:29). Regarding the word idolatry in this verse, in the preface to the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord warned that one of the characteristics of the last days would be that "every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his God ... whose substance is that of an idol" (D&C 1:16). Paul defined covetousness as idolatry (see Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5). When people set their hearts on natural things, or prestige, or power to the point that God is no longer supreme, then that becomes as god to them. They worship, or give allegiance to, those things. This verse suggests that if the elders who remained in Ohio did not labor with their own hands, they might be guilty of this kind of covetousness or idolatry.