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Lesson 48 - The Necessity of a Latter-day Prophet

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LESSON 48.—THE NECESSITY OF A LATTER-DAY PROPHET.

TEXT.—*11. Thess. 2: 23.*

2. That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

3. Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.

LESSON STATEMENT.

Many persons who do not believe in the divinity of Joseph Smith's mission endeavor to prove that there was no necessity of any prophet being raised up to perform the work which he accomplished. They claim that the work done by Jesus Christ and His apostles rendered the coming of a prophet in this day entirely unnecessary. But there were some particulars in which the dispensation introduced by the Savior, and continued by His apostles, was wanting to make it a complete and final one. In the first place, it was not a gathering dispensation. No attempt was made in those days to gather all who accepted the Gospel to one place, where they could be instructed in the ways of God, build temples to His name, and prepare for the second coming of the Redeemer. Secondly, some of the chief apostles after the time of Christ plainly foretold the falling away, or apostasy of the church, and the restoration of the Gospel in its fullness at a later day. Paul, in his second epistle to the Thessalonians, ii: 3, says, "Let no man deceive you by any means; *for that day* (the day of Christ's second coming) *shall not come except there come a falling away first*, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." He speaks of evidences of this falling away, Titus i: 10-11, "For there are many unruly and vain talkers

and deceivers, * * * whose mouths must be stopped; who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake." A graphic picture, not only of that day, but also of this day of hireling priests.

No doubt the final step of the falling away of the people from the plain truths of the Gospel took place when Constantine, one of the Roman emperors, accepted the Christian faith, and established it as the state religion of Rome. In order that the principles of that faith might be rendered more acceptable to the pagan Romans, many of its most precious truths were changed, and heathen rites introduced. From this union of Christian and pagan belief the Roman Catholic Church originated, the head of which, the Pope of Rome, professes to have received his authority direct from Peter, the chief apostle after Christ.

There are many objections to this claim, chief of which is the fact that none of the popes have ever claimed or exercised the gifts and blessings pertaining to the Priesthood which Peter held. Again, so many changes have been introduced into the Catholic faith, that neither it nor the religions which have sprung from it can well be the everlasting, unchangeable Gospel.

If, then, the Priesthood of God was taken from the earth with the death of the apostles, a restoration of that power would be necessary to prepare the people for the second advent of the Savior. This would mean that some person formerly holding that power should restore it to some one upon the

earth. It would necessarily be the visit of an angel to a prophet.

John, the Revelator (Rev. xiv, 6), says: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." If this angel was to come to the earth, as John declares, there must of necessity have been an individual prepared to receive him and his message. Hence the necessity of a latter-day prophet. Joseph Smith was verily raised up most opportunely for this work. As we shall see in continuing the history of the Prophet, he received the message of that angel (Moroni), and afterward received the Priesthood from other angels (John the Baptist, and Peter, James and John), thus literally fulfilling many prophecies concerning these events.

NOTES.

PROPHET.—The meaning usually attached to the term prophet is one who foretells events. According to our ideas it has a somewhat broader significance, denoting one who has the authority to receive the administration of angels and of the Holy Spirit, and to stand at the head of God's work upon the earth. At every period of the world's history, when God has had a dispensation among men, He has always placed a prophet in charge of his affairs. Prophets have been raised up, whenever special occasions demanded, to bear a message to some particular people. A case in point is that of Jonah, who was sent to Nineveh. Abinadi, sent to the people of king Noah, and Samuel, the Lamanite, sent to the people in the city of Zarahemla, were prophets mentioned in the Book of Mormon, as being raised up for the purpose of bearing special messages. Joseph Smith, one of the greatest prophets that ever lived, has the great honor of introducing and standing at the head of the dispensation of the fullness of times.

DISPENSATION.—The term means "power and authority to dispense the word of God, and to administer in all the ordinances thereof." It signifies any period of time when the Gospel has been on the earth. There have been many dispensations in the world's history, all pointing to that in which we live, the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times, when all things shall be restored, and all former dispensations perfected.

APOSTASY.—The departure from the principles of revealed religion after the reception of them. It may occur in the case of an individual or of a community. The apostasy of the primitive church means the departure

of its members from the principles taught by the apostles. This apostasy rendered a restoration of the Gospel necessary.

CONSTANTINE.—The Roman emperor from 306 to 337 A. D. The first emperor to accept the Christian faith. The founder of the city of Constantinople.

WHAT WE MAY LEARN FROM THIS LESSON.

1. That the early Christian church fell away from the faith after the apostles died.
2. That as a result of this apostasy it was necessary for the Gospel to be again restored.
3. That Joseph Smith was chosen to accept the restored Gospel, and open up this dispensation.
4. That by virtue of this mission, he was a prophet of God.
5. That the faith we have accepted is the true Gospel.

QUESTIONS ON THE LESSON.

1. What is an apostasy?
2. What is meant by the apostasy of the primitive church?
3. What did Paul say to the Thessalonians about a falling away?
4. What to Titus?
5. What is a dispensation?
6. What did the apostolic dispensation lack to make it a final one?
7. Who was Constantine?
8. What faith did he establish as the state religion?
9. What changes were made in this religion before the Romans would accept it?
10. What great church had its beginning in this union of the two faiths?
11. Who stands at the head of the Catholic church?
12. From whence does he claim his authority?
13. What evidences have we that this claim is unfounded?
14. In what way would the Gospel be restored to the earth?
15. What does John, the Revelator, say of this restoration?
16. Who was this angel?
17. Who was the prophet raised up to receive his message?
18. From whom did Joseph Smith receive the Priesthood?

ILLUSTRATIVE PASSAGES.

For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision; whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.—*Titus 1: 10, 11.*

THE RESTORATION.—And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.—*Rev. 14: 6.*