

September 30-October 13, 2019

Ephesians

“For the Perfecting of the Saints”

Summary: *The Saints are foreordained to receive the gospel—The gospel is to be restored in the latter days—The Saints are sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise—They know God and Christ by revelation.*

We are saved by grace through faith—The blood of Christ saves Jew and Gentile alike—The Church is built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets.

The Gentiles are fellow heirs with Israel—The love of Christ surpasses all understanding.

There is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism—Apostles and prophets are essential to the Church—The Saints are exhorted to live righteously—They are sealed unto the day of redemption.

The Saints are exhorted to avoid uncleanness and walk uprightly—Husbands and wives should love each other.

Children should honor their parents—Servants and masters are judged by the same law—Saints should put on the whole armor of God.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

Who are the chapters of Ephesians for?

A statement by Elder Bruce R. McConkie is an excellent

introduction to this lesson. “Ephesians is an epistle for all the world, for Jew and Gentile, for husband and wife, for parent and child, for master and servant. It was the mind and will of God in Paul’s day; it is the voice of inspiration in our day; it is an epistle of universal appeal and application. Ephesians proclaims the supremacy of God, the glory of his gospel, the dignity and identity of the Church through which salvation is offered to man. It contains some of Paul’s best writing, and is a document that deals with fundamentals, with the gospel of God in all its saving glory.” “In it, among other things, the Apostle teaches: That the saints of God are foreordained to receive the gospel with all of its ordinances, glories, and blessings; That the same gospel had in his day shall be restored in the dispensation of the fulness of times;

That through obedience to the gospel the saints receive the Holy Spirit of Promise and are sealed up unto eternal life; That God and Christ and the gospel are known only by revelation; That salvation comes by the grace and goodness of God and is for all men, Jew and Gentile alike; That the gospel is administered through one true Church, the Church which receives revelation, the Church directed by living apostles and prophets; and that because of gospel law Christ’s people live righteously, perfect their families, and qualify for exaltation.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Vol.2, p.489*)

What was the religious competition the Ephesians were experiencing?

The challenges in Ephesus included the religion of worshiping Diana, the goddess of fertility. Female gods became popular, such as goddesses of victory, a fish goddess (mermaid), and one connected with fertility, Astarte. This goddess was later known as Ashteroth (the word Easter

seems to have been derived from Astarte). A very popular goddess was Diana. It is interesting to note that Ephesus had a large business surrounding the goddess Diana. The tradition of the burial of Mary the mother of Jesus and subsequently the veneration of Mary beginning in Ephesus became a counterfeit substitute for a religion. The "business" of religion eclipsed the essence of religion.

What is the meaning of "Dispensation of Times?"

Each dispensation of time had its challenges. Latter-day Saints believe that, like the creation periods, there are seven dispensations of time often referred to as seven thousand-year periods. Seven is a prime number and is very symbolic in the Bible. The two annual holy seasons that celebrate the deliverance of Israel, Passover (in the Spring) and Sukkoth (in the Fall) are seven days in length. "The idea of orderliness is also conveyed by a fascinating use of numbers, especially the number seven. The first verse of Genesis in the Hebrew text contains seven words; the second verse, 14. The word *Elohim* (God) is mentioned 7 x 5 (35) times; "earth" 7 x 3 (21) times; "good" seven times. The section on the seventh day consists of 7 x 5 (35) words and the term "seventh day" is mentioned in each of three seven word phrases." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) "Non-LDS Bible scholars (e.g., Fensham) usually arrange the principal biblical covenants into a fivefold sequence (Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and the New Testament covenant), but Latter-day Saints follow a sequence of seven main dispensations (Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ and his apostles, and Joseph Smith) . . ." (**Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Vol.1, Covenants in Biblical Times**) The symbol of seven also applies to purification. It took seven days of rain to cover the earth to cleanse it in Noah's time. Lepers, priests, women, and

sacrifices required seven days of purification. It may be considered that the seven dispensations are a type of a purification in order to prepare for the Lord's arrival in the last days.

How do we relate to "Last Days?"

Paul speaks of the last days and today, modern religious feelings indicate that the last days are at hand. Rabbi Abraham Cohen Kook, the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi in Erez (land) Israel noted the arrival of the beginning of the last days. "It was here that he began to identify with the Zionist ideal and, in opposition to most other rabbis, joined the political movement. This combination of orthodoxy and political Zionism seemed almost a contradiction-in-terms in those days. The majority of religious leaders believed that there could be no return to Zion before the coming of the Messiah; and the active Zionists were mostly those who had abandoned their traditional religious roles and replaced them with secular, political activities. Rabbi Kook, on the other hand, believed that the return to Erez Israel marked the beginning of divine redemption (*athalta di-ge'ullah*)."

(**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) Bright yellow banners in Israel's Orthodox community urge "Prepare for The Imminent Arrival of The Messiah." Various leaders of Islam have proclaimed the imminent return of Mohammed along with Jesus in what they sense are the "last days." Christianity is generally geared to the imminent return of Jesus.

How is the construction of a building used in teaching us about the Latter-days?

It is interesting to note that the metaphor of a building was used in ancient times to denote the structure and stability of the Lord's organization in the "last days." "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner."

(**Psalms 118:22**) "Therefore thus saith the

Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.” (Isaiah 28:16) “Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?” (Matthew 21:42) “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:19-22)

How can I better understand these times by seeing the metaphor of a “building?”

Since this is a visual image, picture a building fitly framed with all parts of it functioning and without apparent holes or breaks in it. From a western building style architectural view, a cornerstone really cannot be removed and the building still remain “fitly framed.” Therefore, picture an eastern building style, a pyramid. Its chief cornerstone is the capstone. It can be removed and the building is still “fitly framed.” A U.S. one-dollar bill has that image with the top, cap or chief cornerstone shown with rays beaming

forth from an all-seeing eye. The pyramid also has twelve blocks as its foundation.

How does the simile of a correct building relate to family and to all the world?

The imagery continues into the family. As the children start their own family, the parents are “removed” from their former role yet still maintain a spiritual influence through their previous teaching and subsequent prayers and spiritual influence on their children. The unity of the family can still be imaged as “fitly framed.” As with any home, protection from unwarranted outside influence is necessary. Security systems or defensive armor are part of the proper stewardship of the family’s leaders. With the Lord as the Chief Cornerstone and following His instructions to defend ourselves with *truth, righteousness, preparation, faith, spirit, prayer, and perseverance*, we can protect our families inside or outside of the home. Paul’s family teachings include sexual purity and propriety as a piece of righteous armor. As mentioned in a previous lesson, Latter-day Saint doctrine is more definitive, in that any sexual contact or activity with any body including our own, that leads to improper sexual emotions, is simply unwarranted. The constant perfecting of ourselves and the family members around us spreads to the community around us. It establishes a ripple that affects all the world.