

Curious Timing
A Scott Roderick
4/17/23

On occasion there are times when the contrast between messages becomes so stark circumstances require serious mental gymnastics to ignore differences in messaging. March 6, 2023, Denver Snuffer posted a blog post stating the following:

“. . .The LDS church has adopted the false creed that the “brethren cannot lead you astray.” Of all the creeds that are an abomination in God’s sight, perhaps this one is the most invidious. It has led very good people to be following uncritically very corrupt men. The leaders are not necessarily (or all) corrupt in the sense that they mean to do evil. But they accomplish nothing but evil when they follow lockstep behind a leader who is interested in appeasing the world in his attempt to gain popularity . . . It is not necessary to make churches utterly corrupt to damn the souls of men. It is only necessary to hedge up the way with an error here and a forgotten truth there. Forgetting and neglecting truth is enough to damn believers” (*Church Organization* blogpost, Denver Snuffer).

Shortly after this statement was posted, the following correlated and authorized quote appeared in the April 2023 General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints:

“. . . Brothers and sisters, unlike vintage comic books and classic cars, prophetic teachings do not become more valuable with age. That is why we should not seek to use the words of past prophets to dismiss the teachings of living prophets” (*A Living Prophet for the Latter-days*, Elder Allen D. Haynie).

The implied meaning of this statement suggests the teachings of a living prophet are preeminent over those who have gone before. On the surface the statement seems harmless and somewhat innocuous. Unfortunately, it is anything but. Living prophets harmonize with the prophets who have gone before. Nephi relied on the words of Isaiah and Jacob used the words of Zenos to express his own testimony in the Allegory of the Tree of Life. Those called by the Lord, Jesus Christ are united by one message, His message. That is why Nephi and Christ both admonish us to study the words of Isaiah because “*all things that he spake have*

been and shall be, even according to the words which he spake” (see RE 3 Nephi 10:4, emphasis added).

Yesterday, Denver posted on his blog another message and in sharp contrast to this conference talk, he gave scriptural references to support the theme of his blog post, *Christ’s Family*. The references are from the Old Covenant but have relevance for our day. Both references are historical accounts from Israel’s history but also serve as types relating to future events.

The first reference is from the book of Judges addressing Gideon’s confrontation and victory over the Midianites. The second reference revisits the battle between David and Goliath, 1 Samuel 8. Both examples instruct us about how the Lord handles confrontations with the enemies of His people, when He takes the battle upon himself. In both examples the people of God face seemingly insurmountable odds. In the first example of Gideon, the Lord intentionally commands Gideon to reduce the size of his force so Gideon’s people recognize the victory is the Lord’s and not Gideon and his people.

In the second example of David and Goliath, the same point of emphasis is present. In sheer physical size David is grossly outmanned. Goliath is a giant with superior weaponry. In contrast, David refuses armor and resorts to the simplest of means, a sling and a few smooth stones from a brook. Armed as a shepherd boy set on defending his father’s flock, David goes forward and slays the giant, Goliath and cuts off his head with his own sword. The act was carried out by David but the victory was the Lord’s.

By referencing these two Old Covenant stories, we are being prepared for a similar confrontation in our future. Just as Gideon confronted the Midianites who had superior numbers, in the last days, the people of Zion will face similar circumstances. Hence, Denver says:

“I’m grateful to know there are those willing to do this. I’m trying to be numbered among you. **However few it may be who find the straight and narrow path, in the end it will be enough. It is always enough**, even when the Lord reduces 32,000 down to 300 (see Judges 3:6), it is still enough to overcome the hosts of Midianites. **It will always be enough. Because the battle is the Lord’s.** (1 Sam. 8:14.) **I hope to be with you for that battle**” (*Christ’s Family*, Denver Snuffer, April 16, 2023, emphasis added).

The Old Covenant prophecies foretell a day when the inhabitants of Zion have a seemingly overwhelming confrontation similar to what Gideon and David experienced. Nephi, using Isaiah’s prophecy, applied Gideon’s victory over Midian to instruct people of our day of this future event.

- “Therefore, thus saith the Lord God of Hosts: O **my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian** [anti-Christ, tyrant] (he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt [bondage]), for yet **a very little while**, and the indignation [of the Assyrian king] shall cease and **mine anger in their** [Assyrian] **destruction**. And the **Lord of Hosts shall stir up a scourge for him** [Assyrian king], according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; [Gideon] and as his rod [reference to Moses and the Holy Order] was upon the sea [military might of Assyria], so shall he [Lord’s servant] lift it up after the manner of Egypt [during Israel’s bondage]. And it shall come to pass **in that day** [last days], that his [Assyrian] burden shall be taken away from off thy [Zion’s inhabitants] shoulder, and his [Assyrian king’s] yoke from off thy neck, and **the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing** [washing and anointing of the Davidic king and or the people]” (RE 2 Nephi 9:19)

Those dwelling in Zion may anticipate a “David vs. Goliath ” experience where their faith in Christ serves as a determining factor in the Lord’s victory over the “Assyrian,” the latter-day tyrant who goes on a conquest of nations and ultimately meets his fate in confronting the Lord’s people in Zion.

Isaiah uses the Assyrian conquest of Jerusalem and king Hezekiah to portray this latter-day event. Following the successful conquest of Judah’s cities, the king of Assyria sends a general and emissary to Jerusalem. Rabshakeh is the Assyrian general sent to either subject Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem by surrender to the rule of Sennacherib of Assyria or compulsion by conquest. The size difference in armies is expressed when Rabshakeh mocks the three ambassadors from Hezekiah with an offer to provide two thousand horses if they can provide riders for them. In contrast, the army of Rabshakeh is composed of a vast army of men outside the border of Jerusalem. Seeking to appeal to the commoners of Jerusalem, Rabshakeh shouts at passing Jews in their native tongue warning that Hezekiah’s reliance on the Lord and not the Assyrian king will end in their destruction.

- Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in the Jews’ language, and said, Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria! Thus says the king: Let not Hezekiah deceive you, for he shall not be able to deliver you. Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, The Lord will surely deliver us, this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. Listen not to Hezekiah,

for thus says the king of Assyria: Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and eat everyone of his vine and everyone of his fig tree, and drink everyone the waters of his own cistern, ***until I come and take you away to a land like your own land*** — a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards. Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The Lord will deliver us. Have any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they among all the gods of these lands that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand? (RE Isaiah 13:4)

At this point Rabshakeh has moved beyond mocking Hezekiah to mocking the Lord directly. The emissaries of Hezekiah deliver Rabshakeh's threats to Hezekiah and Hezekiah rents his garments and covers himself with sackcloth in the temple. Hezekiah sends the ambassadors to Isaiah in search of the Lord's response to Rabshakeh.

- “So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah, and Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall you say unto your master: ***Thus says the Lord: Be not afraid of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land***” (RE Isaiah 13:7, emphasis added).

Rabshakeh and army heard Assyria is under attack and return to Assyria to reinforce the armies there. Before leaving Rabshakeh sends a threatening letter to Hezekiah warning he and his army will return and destroy Jerusalem. Hezekiah reads the letter, rents his garments and goes to the temple to lay the letter before the Lord seeking a response. The Lord replies:

- “. . . Thus says the Lord God of Israel: That which you have prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard. This is the word that the Lord has spoken concerning him: The virgin, the daughter of Zion has despised you and laughed you to scorn, the daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head at you. Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? And against whom have you exalted your voice and lifted up your eyes on high? ***Even against the Holy One of Israel***. By your messengers, you have reproached the Lord and have said, With

the multitude of my chariots I have come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and will cut down the tall cedar trees thereof, and the choice fir trees thereof. And I will enter into the lodgings of his borders and into the forest of his Carmel. I have dug and drunk strange waters, and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of besieged places. Have you not heard long ago how I have done it, and of ancient times that I have formed it? Now have I brought it to pass, that you should be, to lay waste fortified cities into ruinous heaps. Therefore, their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded, they were as the grass of the field and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops and as grain blasted before it is grown up. But I know your abode, and your going out, and your coming in, and your rage against me. Because your rage against me and your tumult has come up into my ears, therefore ***I will put my hook in your nose and my bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back by the way by which you came.*** And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second year, that which springs of the same, and in the third year, sow, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruits thereof. And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of Mount Zion. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall do this. Therefore, thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria: ***He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return and shall not come into this city, says the Lord. For I will defend this city, to save it for my own sake and for my servant David's sake.***

- And it came to pass ***that night that the angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred eighty-five thousand, and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.*** So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went, and returned and dwelled at Nineveh. And it came to pass, ***as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword,*** and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead” (RE 2 Kings 6:10-11, emphasis added).

• As Jerusalem and Mount Zion were preserved in Hezekiah's day, so will the latter-day Zion be confronted with a similar outcome. Just as Gideon's people were

faced with several tests prior to the eventual challenge. So will the Lord's people be sifted to determine who has faith to stand. Of the 32,000 with Gideon, only 300 proved sufficiently faithful and worthy to stand against the enemies of the Lord and His people.

In addition to Isaiah's account of Hezekiah and the Assyrians, the account of Enoch is another example of what happens when the Lord assumes responsibility for defending His people, Zion.

- “And it came to pass that Enoch continued to call upon all the people, save it were the people of Canaan, to repent. And so great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God, **and their enemies came to battle against them, and he spoke the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled — even according to his command — and the rivers of water were turned out of their course, and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness. And all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him.** There also came up a land out of the depths of the sea, and **so great was the fear of the enemies of the people of God that they fled, and stood afar off**, and went upon the land which came up out of the depths of the sea. And the giants of the land also stood afar off. **And there went forth a curse upon all the people who fought against God.**
- **And from that time forth there were wars and bloodsheds among them, but the Lord came and dwelled with his people and they dwelled in righteousness. The fear of the Lord was upon all nations, so great was the glory of the Lord which was upon his people.** And the Lord blessed the land, and they were blessed upon the mountains and upon the high places and did flourish. And the Lord called his people Zion because they were of one heart, and of one mind, and dwelled in righteousness, and there was no poor among them. And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days that he built a city that was called the city of holiness, even Zion.
- And it came to pass that Enoch talked with the Lord. And he said unto the Lord, Surely Zion shall dwell in safety for ever. And the Lord said unto Enoch, Zion have I blessed, **but the residue of the people have I cursed . . .**” (RE Genesis 4:14-15, emphasis added).

Enoch and his people became sufficiently righteous to entertain the presence of Christ among them. While He blessed and prospered the people of Enoch, he cursed the rest of the world and they fought against one another. The glory of the Lord kept the wicked in fear of the Lord and Zion.

The holy scriptures, prophetic writings from bygone days, are the words Lehi referred to in his dream of the Tree of Life. It taught us to cling to the rod of iron, preferably with both hands, to find the Tree of Life and partake of the love of God, the most precious of all fruits.

Those who purport to speak on the Lord's behalf advocate neglect of His prior spoken words and give heed only to their correlated, surveyed, focus grouped revelation. True servants of Christ act in concert to point us back to all the Lord has spoken in previous generations.

“The Spirit cannot lean upon you and cannot focus your mind upon ***the revelation that you are entitled to receive unless you use the scriptures as they were intended to be used—as a Urim and Thummim***; as the basis from which you draw out the truths of God. And the best version of that is, of course, the Book of Mormon” (*Be of Good Cheer*, p.7, emphasis added).

The Lord through Isaiah said:

- “Remember the former things of old, for I am God and there is none else; I am God and there is none like me, ***declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done***, saying, My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure — calling a ravenous bird from the east, ***the man that executes my counsel from a far country***. Yea, ***I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it***. Listen to me, you stout-hearted that are far from righteousness. I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not delay; and ***I will place salvation in Zion for Israel, my glory***” (Isaiah 15:21).