

The Father: Hear Him

Looking around YouTube and talking to as many members as I can, it has become painfully obvious that the understanding of God the Father has been pretty well fractured into three different groups. This fracturing breaks my heart for “this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). God does not change, God’s characteristics don’t change, God is the same yesterday, today and forever. Joseph Smith teaches us plainly in The Lectures On Faith that because of these unchanging characteristics we can love the Father, we can trust Him and thus we can exercise faith in Him. Two of these viewpoints of the Father are false, one is true. The good news is that the scriptures paint a vivid picture of not only who the Father is but also the two false ideologies about the Father that the Lord knew would crop up in the last days. The Father knew these two false ideologies would crop up in the last days because these two false ideologies have cropped up again and again from the time of Adam on. At the time of Jesus they were referred to as Pharisees and Sadducees.

First let’s go over the false ideologies before going into the truth and discuss why these two ideologies are so evil, damning and simply put, of the devil.

1. “All is well in Zion”

This is a group of Saints who are going through the motions. They go to church, they pay their tithing, they may even go to the temple occasionally. Rarely is this group involved in missionary work. The closest thing they get to “missionary work” is feeding the missionaries- which is not missionary work. They do the bare minimum of what they perceive to be required and drink deep from the cup of gentile culture. These members rarely talk of the second coming, they rarely talk of last days prophecies and timelines; they just don’t care. But they will talk your ear off about football, politics, money etc. I would also say that because this group is infatuated with the things of the world they tend to be materialistic and thus care very little for the poor and needy. Also, because of this infatuation they take great pride in their worldly wealth, worldly possessions and worldly knowledge etc. They wear their titles such as “scholar” with great pride. This group because of this behavior become as the Nephites of old, as Mormon described it, “Behold I am laboring with them continually; and when I speak the word of God with sharpness they tremble and anger against me; and when I use no sharpness they harden their hearts against it; wherefore, I fear lest the spirit of the Lord hath ceased striving with them” (Moroni 9:4). The counterpart to these people in the time of Jesus would be the Sadducees. These people generally view God as an ultra-forgiving, no law kind of Father. Their basic belief is that every temple recommend holding member of the Church will make it to the celestial kingdom- it is a very naïve belief. Let’s read about this group in the scriptures and then we will discuss why this belief is so damaging.

2 Nephi 28:7-16, 20-31

7 Yea, and there shall be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; and it shall be well with us.

8 And there shall also be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God—he will justify in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God.

9 Yea, and there shall be many which shall teach after this manner, false and vain and foolish doctrines, and shall be puffed up in their hearts, and shall seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; and their works shall be in the dark.

10 And the blood of the saints shall cry from the ground against them.

11 Yea, they have all gone out of the way; they have become corrupted.

12 Because of pride, and because of false teachers, and false doctrine, their churches have become corrupted, and their churches are lifted up; because of pride they are puffed up.

13 They rob the poor because of their fine sanctuaries; they rob the poor because of their fine clothing; and they persecute the meek and the poor in heart, because in their pride they are puffed up.

14 They wear stiff necks and high heads; yea, and because of pride, and wickedness, and abominations, and whoredoms, they have all gone astray save it be a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men.

15 O the wise, and the learned, and the rich, that are puffed up in the pride of their hearts, and all those who preach false doctrines, and all those who commit whoredoms, and pervert the right way of the Lord, wo, wo, wo be unto them, saith the Lord God Almighty, for they shall be thrust down to hell!

16 Wo unto them that turn aside the just for a thing of naught and revile against that which is good, and say that it is of no worth! For the day shall come that the Lord God will speedily visit the inhabitants of the earth; and in that day that they are fully ripe in iniquity they shall perish.

20 For behold, at that day shall he rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good.

21 And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.

22 And behold, others he flattereth away, and telleth them there is no hell; and he saith unto them: I am no devil, for there is none—and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance.

23 Yea, they are grasped with death, and hell; and death, and hell, and the devil, and all that have been seized therewith must stand before the throne of God, and be judged according to their

works, from whence they must go into the place prepared for them, even a lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment.

24 Therefore, wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion!

25 Wo be unto him that crieth: All is well!

26 Yea, wo be unto him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men, and denieth the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost!

27 Yea, wo be unto him that saith: We have received, and we need no more!

28 And in fine, wo unto all those who tremble, and are angry because of the truth of God! For behold, he that is built upon the rock receiveth it with gladness; and he that is built upon a sandy foundation trembleth lest he shall fall.

29 Wo be unto him that shall say: We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough!

30 For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have.

31 Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the precepts of men, save their precepts shall be given by the power of the Holy Ghost.

So why is this doctrine so damning, damaging, evil and in fine of the devil? Why is that the case?

Matthew 6:24

24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

2 Nephi 25:23

23 For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.

What do we learn from these two scriptures? We learn that those that have their hearts set upon the things of the world and the gentile culture, they cannot love God, for if you loved God and hold fast to God you would learn to despise the world. We also learn that the knowledge that we are saved by grace only after all we can do leads people to a strong desire to “persuade others” ie. missionary work. If one believes this about the Father he will make no efforts to get better, he will not strive to improve and he most certainly WILL NOT attempt to live up to his or her potential as a son or daughter of God. You will hear these members justify this frequently in the

Church by saying something along the lines of “I’ll get perfected in the eternities.” That however is also a false doctrine:

Alma 34:34-39

34 Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world.

35 For behold, if ye have procrastinated the day of your repentance even until death, behold, ye have become subjected to the spirit of the devil, and he doth seal you his; therefore, the Spirit of the Lord hath withdrawn from you, and hath no place in you, and the devil hath all power over you; and this is the final state of the wicked.

36 And this I know, because the Lord hath said he dwelleth not in unholy temples, but in the hearts of the righteous doth he dwell; yea, and he has also said that the righteous shall sit down in his kingdom, to go no more out; but their garments should be made white through the blood of the Lamb.

37 And now, my beloved brethren, I desire that ye should remember these things, and that ye should work out your salvation with fear before God, and that ye should no more deny the coming of Christ;

38 That ye contend no more against the Holy Ghost, but that ye receive it, and take upon you the name of Christ; that ye humble yourselves even to the dust, and worship God, in whatsoever place ye may be in, in spirit and in truth; and that ye live in thanksgiving daily, for the many mercies and blessings which he doth bestow upon you.

39 Yea, and I also exhort you, my brethren, that ye be watchful unto prayer continually, that ye may not be led away by the temptations of the devil, that he may not overpower you, that ye may not become his subjects at the last day; for behold, he rewardeth you no good thing.

In conclusion, this is not who God is, this is not what His characteristics are, believing this damns your progress because you won’t do anything that makes you uncomfortable, you accept that the way you are right now is good enough. It damages you and your family because “wickedness never was happiness”, you won’t be able to find happiness with your heart so set on the world. It kills the motivation for you to preach, to share the gospel because you believe God will save you despite your inaction. But as President George Albert Smith said, “We will attain our exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom only on the condition that we share with our Father’s other children the blessings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ” (Sharing the Gospel with Others, 190). Any belief or any doctrine that facilitates or funnels an individual down a path that will lead him/her away from exaltation is of the devil.

2. “We the few”

This group of members believe that God the Father is an enigma, He is a riddle box, and the scriptures are just one giant puzzle. They act like the only way that one can understand anything

is that if you have a special decoder ring that only a very few, select, spiritually endowed people have. The gospel is confusing, complicated, their answers are never simple or straightforward. Speaking of their answers, they almost always defend themselves and their ideas with the fallacies of ad hominem and the authority fallacy ie. “this scholar, this very prestigious scholar, said ____ and you barely read, let alone can comprehend the manuals of the church...” implying that God and the words of God are impossible for the layman to understand and must be deciphered by those wiser and smarter than you (these are always keyless individuals). The counterpart to these in Jesus’ time is the Pharisees and I would say that the Catholic church became this for many years. A lot of well to do Latter-Day Saints who want the prestige that they see Sectarians, Catholics, Presbyterians receiving in their denominations will act as though that is how God operates in His Kingdom. These individuals hyperinflate what they perceive to be “quantifying commandments” (commandments that they believe quantify the righteous vs the unrighteous) and they will then use as strict adherence to that “quantifying commandment” as THE way to judge everyone. For example, at the times of the Jews, they used how many steps you took on the Sabbath day or cleanliness of ritual bowls etc. Not that keeping the Sabbath day wasn’t or isn’t important but rather this group hyperinflates it to a quantifiable level and then broad strokes you as a bad or unsavable member because of this behavior. A modern equivalent to this would be pornography (for more information on this I recommend watching my video Rebellion vs Weakness). These members seem to have memorized every stat down to the amount of times per day, week, month, addiction levels etc down to a microcosm and then will broadstroke the whole church based on that one deed. These people also in their hyperinflation always hyperinflate what they perceive to be “spiritual commandments” (even though we know there is no such thing) while they completely neglect their temporal salvation, believing it to be lesser. These people will scoff at people going to the gym, they will scoff at people getting a food storage, they will scoff at people gardening etc. and they will believe due to their immense, incalculable worthiness the Lord will take care of those “trivial matters” for them. Much like the first group, this group doesn’t do missionary work, this group believes itself to be ultra-worthy but ask them when the last time they have gone tracting with the missionaries was and watch them as they blush and cower. You ask this group when was the last time you baptized somebody, you ask them how many people did you baptize on your mission and watch as they immediately rationalize away this quantifiable reality as being insignificant, despite the fact that one obtains their exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom ONLY on this quantifiable commandment, versus the quantifiable sin of coveting which has no mention. Typically, this group is born by individuals with extreme inadequacies, seeking to overcompensate in the areas of life that they can succeed in. They won’t pursue any worldly knowledge, worldly careers, wholesome athletics etc. and the root isn’t really because they actually view these things as evil, it’s because they have been found wanting and inadequate in all of these fields. This becomes their way to obtain “the power and honors of men.” This becomes their way to become special. And in the process of doing this, they turn God the Father into a distant, unknowable, unrelatable bystander. They do this to keep fear up so that people will keep coming to them to decipher God. “Please subscribe to me, please like my videos and comment, please sign up for these newsletters, please sign up for this online group and give us monthly paychecks...” This group is known for priestcraft. They love to teach that God is going to kill billions and billions of people and only

“we few” will be the ones left standing. And not because they accepted and did all that they could to live the simple and straightforward gospel truths but rather because they “could see what others could not see, they could understand what others could not understand.”

Jacob 4:14-16

14 But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people; and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall; for God hath taken away his plainness from them, and delivered unto them many things which they cannot understand, because they desired it. And because they desired it God hath done it, that they may stumble.

15 And now I, Jacob, am led on by the Spirit unto prophesying; for I perceive by the workings of the Spirit which is in me, that by the stumbling of the Jews they will reject the stone upon which they might build and have safe foundation.

16 But behold, according to the scriptures, this stone shall become the great, and the last, and the only sure foundation, upon which the Jews can build.

JS-M:23-26

23 Behold, I speak these things unto you for the elect's sake; and you also shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled, for all I have told you must come to pass; but the end is not yet.

24 Behold, I have told you before;

25 Wherefore, if they shall say unto you: Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: Behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not;

26 For as the light of the morning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, and covereth the whole earth, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

1 Nephi 22:23

23 For the time speedily shall come that all churches which are built up to get gain, and all those who are built up to get power over the flesh, and those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world, and to do all manner of iniquity; yea, in fine, all those who belong to the kingdom of the devil are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake; they are those who must be brought low in the dust; they are those who must be consumed as stubble; and this is according to the words of the prophet.

2 Nephi 26:29

29 He commandeth that there shall be no priestcrafts; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion.

2 Nephi 27:16

16 And now, because of the glory of the world and to get gain will they say this, and not for the glory of God.

Helaman 7:5

5 Condemning the righteous because of their righteousness; letting the guilty and the wicked go unpunished because of their money; and moreover to be held in office at the head of government, to rule and do according to their wills, that they might get gain and glory of the world, and, moreover, that they might the more easily commit adultery, and steal, and kill, and do according to their own wills

3 Nephi 29:7

7 Yea, and wo unto him that shall say at that day, to get gain, that there can be no miracle wrought by Jesus Christ; for he that doeth this shall become like unto the son of perdition, for whom there was no mercy, according to the word of Christ!

4 Nephi 1:26

26 And they began to be divided into classes; and they began to build up churches unto themselves to get gain, and began to deny the true church of Christ.

2 Nephi 25:23

23 For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.

In conclusion, this is not who God is, this is not what His characteristics are, believing this damns your progress because when you look beyond the mark the Lord takes the understanding of the plain and simple things from you. It damages you and your family because “you have omitted the weightier parts of the law” and by so doing you “enlarge the wounds of those who are already wounded, instead of consoling and healing their wounds; and those who have not been wounded, instead of feasting upon the pleasing word of God have daggers placed to pierce their souls and wound their delicate minds” (Jacob 2:9). It kills the motivation for you to preach, to share the gospel: you view these people as unsavable, as being too dumb or spiritually inept to understand the enlightening knowledge that you would have otherwise imparted to these unworthy souls. So you simply tell them, “be perfect like me” and brush your hands and move on. But as President George Albert Smith said, “We will attain our exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom only on the condition that we share with our Father’s other children the blessings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ” (Sharing the Gospel with Others, 190). The first group believes that you don’t have to do anything in order to be saved and this group believes that your best is not good enough, perfection according to their standards is required for exaltation. Any belief or any doctrine that facilitates or funnels an individual down a path that will lead him away from exaltation is of the devil, and this clearly is the doctrine warned of in the book of Jonah, “they that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy” (Jonah 2:8).

3. So who is the Father really?

2 Nephi 31:3

3 For my soul delighteth in plainness; for after this manner doth the Lord God work among the children of men. For the Lord God giveth light unto the understanding; for he speaketh unto men according to their language, unto their understanding.

Doctrine and Covenants 45:10-11, 15-16

10 Wherefore, come ye unto it, and with him that cometh I will reason as with men in days of old, and I will show unto you my strong reasoning.

11 Wherefore, hearken ye together and let me show unto you even my wisdom—the wisdom of him whom ye say is the God of Enoch, and his brethren,

15 Wherefore, hearken and I will reason with you, and I will speak unto you and prophesy, as unto men in days of old.

16 And I will show it plainly as I showed it unto my disciples as I stood before them in the flesh, and spake unto them, saying: As ye have asked of me concerning the signs of my coming, in the day when I shall come in my glory in the clouds of heaven, to fulfil the promises that I have made unto your fathers

Isaiah 1:18-20

18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Ether 12:39

39 And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face, and that he told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things;

Moroni 7:15-16

15 For behold, my brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night.

16 For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

Alma 13:23

23 And they are made known unto us in plain terms, that we may understand, that we cannot err; and this because of our being wanderers in a strange land; therefore, we are thus highly favored, for we have these glad tidings declared unto us in all parts of our vineyard.

2 Nephi 32:3-7

3 Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.

4 Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark.

5 For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do.

6 Behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and there will be no more doctrine given until after he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh. And when he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh, the things which he shall say unto you shall ye observe to do.

7 And now I, Nephi, cannot say more; the Spirit stoppeth mine utterance, and I am left to mourn because of the unbelief, and the wickedness, and the ignorance, and the stiffneckedness of men; for they will not search knowledge, nor understand great knowledge, when it is given unto them in plainness, even as plain as word can be.

2 Nephi 25:23

23 For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.

2 Nephi 28:32

32 Wo be unto the Gentiles, saith the Lord God of Hosts! For notwithstanding I shall lengthen out mine arm unto them from day to day, they will deny me; nevertheless, I will be merciful unto them, saith the Lord God, if they will repent and come unto me; for mine arm is lengthened out all the day long, saith the Lord God of Hosts.

1 Nephi 21:14-16

14 But, behold, Zion hath said: The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me—but he will show that he hath not.

15 For can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee, O house of Israel.

16 Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.

“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father... Verily, verily I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” (John 5:19, John 14:9)

So who is the Father? The Father is open, plain, the Father wants to be understood. The Father wants to be a part of your life, not through somebody else, but personally he wants to be a part of your life. He makes his will known to us through the keys and through the Holy Ghost. The word of God is not complicated, it is not meant to be understood figuratively, metaphorically, it is spoken in plain language, according to the plain language of the Father. He speaks to our own personal understanding and in our own personal language. You don't have to understand cryptic footnotes and obscure references to understand what time period we live in or what seal we are in or what the commandments of God are or what is expected of us. That is all laid out plainly by the Father for us, all we can do is either accept it or reject it (once again, I recommend reading or watching my video *Rebellion vs Weakness*). But once we accept it, will we be perfect? Will we never again succumb to weaknesses of the flesh? The Lord plainly teaches for us to reason with Him, to talk with Him, and to work out our salvation with Him through repentance. He will eventually make our weaknesses strengths in His own due time. Eventually we will be saved by the Lord's grace, but only after all that we can do. The Lord's arms are always open to us, He has the power and the desire to save as many as will come unto Him. It doesn't matter how blood red your sins are, He can make them white. It doesn't matter how many times you fall down, the Lord will always be standing there beside you ready to help pick you up. If you keep relying on Him and repenting the Lord will save you despite your weaknesses, after all you can do. Once you are filled with this love, and understanding who the Father and the Son really truly are, once you have partaken of that fruit, your desire will be to share that fruit, that light, that love, with as many of your brothers and sisters as you can. That love, that understanding of God and the Son's true nature is reflected in one's willingness and openness in sharing the gospel. Get up brothers and sisters and partake of the fruit, for this is life eternal, that [we] might know [the Father] the only true [and living] God, and Jesus Christ, whom [he has] sent. You will know when you have finally tasted of the fruit for you will no longer be restrained, and you will open your mouth and it will be filled. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:5–6, 9, 22; Matthew 24:4–5, 11, 24. “Take Heed That No Man Deceive You”

Many of the Savior's prophecies about the destruction of Jerusalem can also apply to our day, when we are preparing for the Second Coming of the Savior (see Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:5–21). The Savior taught that false Christs and false prophets would arise and would “deceive many ... if possible,” including, as recorded in verse 22, “the very elect, who are the elect according to the covenant.”

The term elect refers to “those who love God with all their hearts and live lives that are pleasing to Him” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Elect”; scriptures.lds.org). In some instances, it refers more specifically to baptized members of the Church. President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) taught

that “‘according to the covenant’ means members of the Church of Jesus Christ” (The Teachings of Harold B. Lee, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1996], 401; see also D&C 29:7; 33:6).

Much of what Jesus taught in the Olivet Discourse was to prepare His disciples, both then and now, so they would not be deceived and overcome by evil. President M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, while commenting on these prophecies made by the Savior, cautioned Church members not to accept unauthorized teachings:

“As Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is our duty to be watchmen on the tower, warning Church members to beware of false prophets and false teachers who lie in wait to ensnare and destroy faith and testimony. Today we warn you that there are false prophets and false teachers arising; and if we are not careful, even those who are among the faithful members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will fall victim to their deception.

“President Joseph F. Smith gave wise and clear counsel that applies to us today:

“‘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. ... And the moment that individuals look to any other source, that moment they throw themselves open to the seductive influences of Satan. ... 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’ (Gospel Doctrine, 5th ed. [1939], 42)” (“Beware of False Prophets and False Teachers,” Ensign, Nov. 1999, 62).

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22; Matthew 24:24. “If Possible, They Shall Deceive the Very Elect”

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:21–22 signals the transition from events associated with the destruction of Jerusalem to signs that will precede the Second Coming and the preparation the Saints must make to remain faithful during the last days. Many of the Savior’s warnings on the Mount of Olives were given to help the elect avoid being deceived during this time.

The phrase “if possible” suggests that if the elect are going to avoid being deceived, they must keep their covenants and hearken to the word of the Lord. President M. Russell Ballard shared an experience illustrating how a Church member overcame deception:

“One of my fine missionaries who served with me when I was the mission president in Toronto came to see me some years later. I asked him, ‘Elder, how can I help you?’

“‘President,’ he said, ‘I think I’m losing my testimony.’

“I couldn’t believe it. I asked him how that could be possible.

“‘For the first time I have read some anti-Mormon literature,’ he said. ‘I have some questions, and nobody will answer them for me. I am confused, and I think I am losing my testimony.’

“I asked him what his questions were, and he told me. They were the standard anti-Church issues, but I wanted a little time to gather materials so I could provide meaningful answers. So we set up an appointment 10 days later, at which time I told him I would answer every one of his questions. As he started to leave, I stopped him.

“Elder, you’ve asked me several questions here today,’ I said. ‘Now I have one for you.’

“Yes, President?’

“How long has it been since you read from the Book of Mormon?’ I asked.

“His eyes dropped. He looked at the floor for a while. Then he looked at me. ‘It’s been a long time, President,’ he confessed.

“All right,’ I said. ‘You have given me my assignment. It’s only fair that I give you yours. I want you to promise me that you will read in the Book of Mormon for at least one hour every day between now and our next appointment.’ He agreed that he would do that.

“Ten days later he returned to my office, and I was ready. I pulled out my papers to start answering his questions, but he stopped me.

“President,’ he said, ‘that isn’t going to be necessary.’ Then he explained: ‘I know that the Book of Mormon is true. I know Joseph Smith is a prophet of God.’

“Well, that’s great,’ I said. ‘But you’re going to get answers to your questions anyway. I worked a long time on this, so you just sit there and listen.’

“And so I answered all his questions and then asked, ‘Elder, what have you learned from this?’

“And he said, ‘Give the Lord equal time.’

“May we engrave that thought on our minds and carry it with us as we walk through this process of mortality. Let us give the Lord equal time” (“When Shall These Things Be?” Ensign, Dec. 1996, 60).