

D&C#37 "We Thank Thee O God, for a Prophet"

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I. Introduction

The title of this lesson, "We Thank Thee O God, for a Prophet," is also the title of a hymn found in the Latter-day Saints hymnal, #19.

Karen Lynn Davidson states,

"[It was written by William Fowler, adapted by music originally written by Caroline Sheridan North for the hymn, "The Officer's Funeral March. In the words of George D. Pyper], 'Could Mrs. Norton enter a Latter-day Saint chapel today she would be astonished to learn that the music which she dedicated to a fallen soldier of war is now frequently sung to a new song of praise in honor of a modern prophet of peace.'" (*Our Latter-Day Hymns*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1988, 48).

The words of the hymn are as follows:

"We thank thee, O God, for a prophet To guide us in these latter days.

We thank thee for sending the gospel To lighten our minds with its rays.

We thank thee for every blessing Bestowed by thy bounteous hand.

We feel it a pleasure to serve thee, And love to obey thy command.

"When dark clouds of trouble hang o'er us And threaten our peace to destroy,

There is hope smiling brightly before us, And we know
that deliv'rance is nigh.
We doubt not the Lord nor his goodness. We've proved
him in days that are past.
The wicked who fight against Zion Will surely be
smitten at last.

"We'll sing of his goodness and mercy. We'll praise
him by day and by night, Rejoice in his glorious
gospel, And bask in its life-giving light.
Thus on to eternal protection The honest and faithful
will go, While they who reject this glad message Shall
never such happiness know."

("We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet #19," in *Hymns
Of The Church Of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*.
Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-
day Saints, 1985).

This hymn, more than any other, expresses the gratitude and devotion the Latter-day Saints feel for their living prophet. A basic tenet of our faith is that the Church Jesus Christ organized when He was upon the earth, with the death of His apostles, fell into apostasy. His Church has been restored to the earth in these latter days through the Prophet Joseph Smith. It is not, however, the Church of Joseph Smith or any other individual. It is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, directed by a living prophet, who receives revelation from Jesus Christ Himself.

One may ask, "What is a Prophet?" and the corresponding question, "Why does God only speak through a living Prophet and not someone else? This is where we begin our discussion.

A. What is a Prophet?

Victor L. Ludlow states,

"Instead of personally administering to the children of men, the Lord has ordained prophets to act in his name. A prophet acts as God's messenger by declaring his divine will. While some forms of revelation are open to all who diligently seek heavenly communication, God has reserved certain manifestations for his special representatives. Throughout the ages these men testify of and for God as they teach divine truths by proclaiming the gospel to the

ignorant and the wise, the faithful and unbelieving. These special, divinely appointed witnesses are called 'prophets,' a title derived from the Greek word *prophetes*, which means 'inspired teacher.' The Greek root is *prophanai*, meaning literally, *pro* 'for' + *phanai* 'to speak.' A prophet is simply one *who speaks for God*, one who is his inspired mouthpiece." (*Practices and Principles of the Restored Gospel*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992, 101-102).

When God established communications with His children upon the earth, He chose to do so by speaking directly through one specially designated as his mouthpiece. As He spoke to His designated servant, he was then directed to convey the word of the Lord to His children. We read of these individuals and their callings by God in the writings of the Old Testament. These include Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, among others.

B. Why Does God Only Speak Through A Prophet?

"Foreordained prophets have stood at the head of God's religious communities throughout the ages, from the days of Adam to the present. The Lord has declared prophets as his primary means of communicating His will to the people.

OT, Amos 3:7

7 Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret [word] unto his servants the prophets.

In order to prevent confusion and conflicting direction, there is only one upon the earth who is designated as the Lord's Prophet and President of His Church. He alone stands as the Lord's mouthpiece upon the earth.

C. False Prophets

In the world in which we live, there are many voices who presume to speak for the Lord and declare His will. Some are sincere and well meaning; others seek to mislead and are driven by unrighteous desires.

NT, Matthew 7:15, 17-18, 20

15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

In the early days of the Church, there were those individuals who, due to their limited understanding, did not understand that revelation for the Church came only through Joseph Smith. Oliver Cowdery was taught this important lesson.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Craig J. Ostler state,

"It was not his [Oliver Cowdery's] right to receive revelation for the Church. The Lord's house is a house of order, and there can never be more than one man on earth at a time who can speak by way of revelation to the whole Church...This principle was an important clarification for many early members of the Church who had come from a congregational background in which any member of the congregation could proclaim doctrine." (*Revelations of the Restoration*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000, 207-208).

Victor L. Ludlow continues,

"Living prophets speak forth with spiritual power and conviction when they deliver God's word. They add their witness to the many [prophets] who have preceded them, and they speak with the same prophetic authority as the ancient prophets.

"Though prophets speak the word of the Lord as personally revealed to them, the message has always carried the same basic themes: repent and draw near unto the Lord, keep the commandments, and serve one another. The prophets' primary function, then, is not necessarily to reveal new truths, but to remind the people of what they should already have

learned from the [Holy] scriptures and earlier teachings [of the prior prophets]." (*Practices and Principles of the Restored Gospel*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992, 102-103).

II. Our Need For A Living Prophet

In 1939, prior to the outbreak of World War II, Hugh B. Brown was serving as a barrister or attorney in England. He had formed a special relationship with a prominent Englishman. He was a current member of the House of Commons and had been a former justice of the supreme court of Britain. On this particular occasion, he invited Mr. Brown to his office. He asked him to come and present a legal brief to him regarding his belief of the necessity of a living prophet.

Mr. Brown states,

"I began by asking, 'May I proceed, sir, on the assumption that you are a Christian?'"

"'I am.'

"I assume that you believe in the Bible--the Old and New Testaments?"

"'I do.'"

"The English gentleman said that he believed the biblical account of the Lord speaking to prophets. However, he maintained that such communication had stopped soon after the Resurrection of Christ. The conversation continued with another question from Mr. Brown:

"Why do you think it stopped?"

"'I can't say.'

"'You think that God hasn't spoken since then?'"

"'Not to my knowledge.'

"'May I suggest some possible reasons why he has not spoken. Perhaps it is because he cannot. He has lost the power.'

"He said, 'Of course that would be blasphemous.'

"'Well, then, if you don't accept that, perhaps he doesn't speak to men because he doesn't love us anymore. He is no longer interested in the affairs of men.'

"'No,' he said, 'God loves all men, and he is no respecter of persons.'

"'Well, then,...the only other possible answer as I see it is that we don't need him. We have made such rapid strides in education and science that we don't need God any more.'

"And then he said, and his voice trembled as he thought of the impending war, 'Mr. Brown, there never was a time in the history of the world when the voice of God was needed as it is needed now. Perhaps you can tell me why he doesn't speak.'

"My answer was, 'He does speak, he has spoken; but men need faith to hear him.'" (In *Conference Report*, October 1967, 117-118; or *Improvement Era*, December 1967, 36-37).

There was a period following the death of Jesus Christ and His Apostles when the authority to act in the name of God was taken from the earth. The Prophet Amos had prophesied of this time in the history of the world.

OT, Amos 8:11-12

11 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord:

12 And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.

Least some shall conclude that this was fulfilled during the ministry of Jesus and His Apostles. Paul taught in his second letter to the Thessalonians that following his death, individuals would come forward and teach that the second coming of Christ was near at hand. His return, however, would not occur until after there had been a falling away from the truths they had been taught.

NT, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

1 NOW we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

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;*

It is the doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that the "falling away," Paul addressed, did occur. Subsequently, in these latter days, the Church of Jesus Christ has been restored through the prophet Joseph Smith. The Church of Jesus Christ is now upon the earth, led by a living prophet who receives revelation from Jesus Christ regarding His Church.

Ezra Taft Benson states,

"The most important prophet, so far as we are concerned, is the one who is living in our day and age. This is the prophet who has today's instructions from God to us today. God's revelation to Adam did not instruct Noah how to build the ark. Every generation has need of the ancient scriptures plus the current scriptures from the living prophet. Therefore, the most crucial reading and pondering which you should do is the latest inspired words from the Lord's mouthpiece." (In *Conference Report*, Korea Area Conference, 1975, 52).

*How are we blessed because there is a living prophet on the earth today?

Because there is a living prophet upon the earth, we do not need to be deceived by the deceptions offered by Satan regarding the various ideas and perceptions circulated in the world. We are informed regarding God's acceptable conduct of His children. God makes it clear, through his living Prophet, the choices that will bring us lasting joy and happiness and those that will not. His words give us hope and faith as we strive to live in a world that is becoming increasingly more and more wicked.

III. The Roles Of A Living Prophet

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual states,

"The members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are [sustained by the church members as] prophets, seers, and revelators. However, only the President of the Church is authorized to receive revelation for the entire Church and to exercise all the priesthood keys necessary to govern the Church." (*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 214).

The Doctrine and Covenants addresses the roles served by the living prophet. We will address the scriptures and instruction they provide.

"a. The prophet speaks for the Lord and reveals the Lord's will."

Doctrine and Covenants 1:38

38 What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.

39 For behold, and lo, the Lord is God, and the Spirit beareth record, and the record is true, and the truth abideth forever and ever. Amen.

Doctrine and Covenants 21:4-5

4 Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

5 For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.

Doctrine and Covenants 43:2

2 For behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye have received a commandment for a law unto my church,

through him whom I have appointed unto you to receive commandments and revelations from my hand.

Doctrine and Covenants 68:3-4

3 And this is the ensample unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost.

4 And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation.

"b. The prophet testifies of Jesus Christ and teaches the gospel."

Doctrine and Covenants 20:21-26

21 Wherefore, the Almighty God gave his Only Begotten Son, as it is written in those scriptures which have been given of him.

22 He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them.

23 He was crucified, died, and rose again the third day;

24 And ascended into heaven, to sit down on the right hand of the Father, to reign with almighty power according to the will of the Father;

25 That as many as would believe and be baptized in his holy name, and endure in faith to the end, should be saved--

26 Not only those who believed after he came in the meridian of time, in the flesh, but all those from the beginning, even as many as were before he came, who believed in the words of the holy prophets, who spake as they were inspired by the gift of the Holy Ghost, who truly testified of him in all things, should have eternal life,

B/M, Mosiah 13:33

33 For behold, did not Moses prophesy unto them concerning the coming of the Messiah, and that God should redeem his people? Yea, and even all the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began--have they not spoken more or less concerning these things?

"c. The Prophet is a seer."

Doctrine and Covenants 21:1

1 BEHOLD, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ,

B/M, Mosiah 8:13-18

13 Now Ammon said unto him: I can assuredly tell thee, O king, of a man that can translate the records; for he has wherewith that he can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date; and it is a gift from God. And the things are called interpreters, and no man can look in them except he be commanded, lest he should look for that he ought not and he should perish. And whosoever is commanded to look in them, the same is called seer.

14 And behold, the king of the people who are in the land of Zarahemla is the man that is commanded to do these things, and who has this high gift from God.

15 And the king said that a seer is greater than a prophet.

16 And Ammon said that a seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have, except he should possess the power of God, which no man can; yet a man may have great power given him from God.

17 But a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known.

18 Thus God has provided a means that man, through faith, might work mighty miracles; therefore he becometh a great benefit to his fellow beings.

*What is a seer?

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual states,

"A seer is a prophet upon whom God bestows great power to know the past and the future. He can know things that are not known or are hidden. He also can have the power to translate ancient records." (*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 215).

In Doctrine and Covenants 101:43-54, the Lord gives a parable regarding His will concerning the redemption of Zion. The servant was directed by the nobleman to go to a very choice spot of land, and to plant twelve olive trees. The watchmen were to protect the tress from the advantage of a tower which they were to build. From the tower, they would be alerted if an enemy should come to spoil the trees and take the fruit. They were also to build a hedge around the vineyard.

While the servants were in the process of building the foundation for the tower, they began to question the wisdom of building the tower, especially in that it was a time of peace, and determined that the money of the Nobleman might be better used by placing it in the hands of the exchangers. As they were in disagreement, they did not follow the directions previously given by the Nobleman.

In the night, the enemy came and broke the hedge. The watchmen fled in terror. The enemy proceeded to destroyed the olive trees.

The Nobleman came and reprimanded the watchmen for failing to do their duty. Even if they had fallen asleep, the watchmen on the tower could have alerted them in time for them to prepare and the enemy would not have broken the hedge and his vineyard would have been saved.

*Which commandment did the servants fail to obey?

They determined not to build the tower.

*What could have happened if the servants had built the

tower?

The watchmen on the tower could have seen the enemy from a distance thereby giving the servants advanced notice so they could have been prepared to protect the Nobleman's vineyard.

*How does this apply to the attention we give the President of the Church?

The Nobleman in the parable represents the Lord. The watchmen in the tower is the Lord's prophet. The twelve olive trees are the tribes of Israel. They may also represent the members of the Church. If we, as members of the Church, heed the direction the Prophet gives, we will be protected and preserved from the enemy we cannot yet see.

*The President of the Church can see the enemy "while he [is] yet afar off" (D&C 101:54). What dangers have latter-day prophets seen and warned us about?

One personal example come to mind. Various prophets over the years have counseled the members of the Church to avoid going into debt. This counsel became even more frequent with the innovation of credit cards and their ease in obtaining credit. The counsel of the prophets was also exemplified by my parents who had lived during the depression. They had personal experience with hard times. As a newly married couple and then as parents, we were determined to lived within our means and not to occur debt. There were times when we went without but, with the exception of our house and car, we were debt free. I did not fully realize the effect our frugal living would have upon our children. As they married, they also have been adamant regarding avoiding debt in their families. The counsel we had followed as a family, enabled us, and now our children, to avoid the stress and worry many others have experienced as they incurred debt, and increased interest, they could not afford. In this area, and many others, as a family we were blessed to reap the benefits of following the counsel of the prophet.

"d. The prophet presides over the Church."

Doctrine and Covenants 107:91-92

91 And again, the duty of the President of the office of the High Priesthood is to preside over the whole church, and to be like unto Moses--

92 Behold, here is wisdom; yea, to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church.

(a-d *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 215).

*What blessings do we receive because the true Church is always led by a prophet who is chosen and guided by God?

Since the death of Joseph Smith, the senior member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has served as the next Prophet and President of the Church. There is no unnecessary seeking for office. Each member of the Quorum understands that the Lord selects His prophet through the process of longevity and advanced preparation. We, as a Church, are blessed to know that God is at the helm of His Church. He prepares His future prophet with the qualities and abilities necessary to guide His Church at the precise time of his calling.

Doctrine and Covenants 107:22 [underline added]

22 Of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church.

While the next prophet of the Church is selected and chosen by the Lord, it is the privilege and blessing of the Saints to signify their support and sustain the Lord's choice to be His prophet. The opportunity of sustaining and supporting applies to all whom the Lord calls, through the direction of His leaders, both general and local, to serve. As we show our support of the individual called to serve, from the Prophet of the Church to the Assistant instructor

in the Nursery, we pledge our faith, prayers, and support on behalf of the individual called to serve.

*How can we sustain the prophet in his role as President of the Church?

We manifest our support of the prophet by praying for his health and strength; by following his counsel and direction; by doing our part to help build the kingdom of God where we live; and by being an example to others in both word and deed as we strive to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and follow His example.

IV. Heeding the Words Of A Living Prophet

*What do these verses teach us about our responsibility to listen to the prophet and the blessings we will receive?

Doctrine and Covenants 21:4-6 [underline added]

4 Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

5 For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.

6 For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name's glory.

We are to heed the words given to us by the Prophet as we would heed the words given by the Lord. The Prophet speaks the Lord's words to us. The promise is that if we heed the prophet's counsel, the gates of hell shall not prevail against us and that Satan and his minions will have no power over us. The unseen spirits of those on the other side of the veil, likely our ancestors, will also assist and support us.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Craig J. Ostler state,

"A gate prevails when it keeps us in from or out of the place we desire to go. Because of the atonement of Christ the gates of hell--that is the place of departed spirits--

will not prevail. Ultimately all spirits will be reunited with their bodies in a union that is inseparable.

"The promise given in this verse is that the price of darkness and all his legions of hell cannot prevail over the Saints of God. [Also] the promise...is that darkness will be dispelled by light, falsehood by truth, and wickedness by righteousness for those who trod the path of holiness.

"As we choose to march with the armies of heaven, they choose to march with us." (*Revelations of the Restoration*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000, 177).

Harold B. Lee taught,

"The only safety we have as members of this church is to do exactly what the Lord said to the Church in that day when the Church was organized [see D&C 21:4-5]...There will be some things that take patience and faith. You may not like what comes from the authority of the Church. It may contradict your political views. It may contradict your social views. It may interfere with some of your social life. But if you listen to these things, as if from the mouth of the Lord himself, with patience and faith, the promise is that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against you' [D&C 21:6]." (In *Conference Report*, October 1970, 152; or *Improvement Era*, December 1970, 126).

*How can we learn of the prophet's inspired counsel?

The Church's magazines, namely the Ensign, New Era, and The Friend, are published monthly to inform and inspire us. The Church News, published weekly, also contains direction and counsel from our church leaders. The manual used in the Relief Society and Priesthood over the past fifteen years has been titled: Teachings of the Presidents. It has addressed the teachings of each of the past Prophets of the Church. Periodically, letters of instruction have been read in our Church meetings, providing us with specific directions from the First Presidency. We can also go to the website of the Church, www.lds.org for up-to-date information.

Ezra Taft Benson stated at the close of April Conference, 1988,

"For the next six months, your conference edition of the *Ensign* [magazine], should stand next to your standard works and be referred to frequently." (In *Conference Report*, April, 1988, 97; or *Ensign*, May 1988, 84).

As we live at a time when deception and dishonesty is so prevalent, some may wonder if it could also occur with the Lord's prophet? The answer is no.

Joseph F. Smith taught,

"If [the President of the Church] should ever become unfaithful, God would; remove him out of his place. I testify in the name of Israel's God that he will not suffer the head of the Church, whom he has chosen to stand at the head, to transgress his laws and apostatize; the moment he should take a course that would in time lead to it, God would take him away. Why? Because to suffer a wicked man to occupy that position would be to allow, as it were, the fountain to become corrupted, which is something he will never permit." (*Gospel Doctrine*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1919, [Eighth Edition, 1949], 44-45).

The weak link is not the prophet failing the Lord, it is us when we fail to heed the words of the Lord's prophet.

Bruce D. Porter states,

"When my wife and I were a young married couple, we lived in the Boston area, where I attended school. Another young couple moved into our ward shortly after we did. They were converts of about two years...I was concerned about how they would do,...so it was with pleasure that I accepted the calling to be their home teacher. I looked forward to helping strengthen their testimonies of the gospel.

"My companion and I arrived at their modest apartment one evening to home teach them. They had just completed a home evening with their little baby. I made a mental note that it would be a good idea for my wife and I to start holding home evenings so...when a child arrived we would already have the habit. They then eagerly showed us their Book of Remembrance in which they had collected many names of

ancestors from both sides of the family. I remembered that it had been a long time since I had looked at my Book of Remembrance.

"After our lesson they took us out to the screened back porch where there were stacked ice cream buckets filled with wheat, sugar, flour, and other food--a complete year's supply of food. I had supposed, somehow, that as students that counsel didn't apply to us! By now I was feeling very humble. I had come to teach them, but they were teaching me in every point. As we left their little apartment I noticed a picture of the temple hanging near their door. I remembered that President Spencer W. Kimball said that every Latter-day Saint family should have a picture of the temple prominently displayed in their home, and I remembered that we didn't have one...

"I went home, filled with a spirit of repentance, and found a small picture of the Swiss Temple in a mission brochure. I cut it out and taped it on our wall. Since that time we have always had a picture of the temple in our home. Every time I look at it, it reminds me of a young convert couple who taught us what it means to 'follow the prophet.'" (Address given in the Bountiful Mueller Park Stake Conference, 17 January 1999).

Some of us are like Bruce Porter and his family. We hear the words of the prophet and his words of counsel to us, but too often it ends there. If we are really "following the prophet," then, like Bruce and his family, we will repent and go and do as the Prophet has counseled. It is important that we not be hearers only, but doers also. (see NT, James 1:22.)

V. Latter-Day Prophets' Examples of Christ-like Love

Each of the prophets have set an example for us to show kindness and give service to others. Three examples from the lives of Joseph Smith, Spencer W. Kimball and Gordon B. Hinckley will illustrate their example.

Edwin F. Parry states,

"From a biographical sketch of John Lyman Smith, brother of George A. Smith, once counselor to President Brigham Young and cousin of the Prophet Joseph...The incident described

happened in Nauvoo, Illinois, at the time that place was first settled by the Latter-day Saints. The family of John Lyman Smith's father first made their home in a log stable. The place was unhealthy and the family, all but the mother came down with the chills and fever. John L. Smith says:

"The next day the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum visited us and administered to all of us, father being delirious from the effects of the fever. Their words comforted us greatly, as they said in the name of the Lord 'you all shall be well again.' Upon leaving the hovel, Joseph placed his slippers upon my father's feet and sprang upon his horse from the doorway and rode home barefoot. The next day Joseph removed father to his own house and nursed him until he recovered." (quoted in *Stories about Joseph Smith the Prophet: A Collection of Incidents Related by Friends Who Knew Him*. Compiled by Edwin F. Parry. Salt Lake City: The Deseret News Press, 1934, 33-34).

Our Heritage reports a experience from the life of Spencer W. Kimball,

"An incident [occurred] that was typical of [Spencer W. Kimball's] concern for all people [took place] in a crowded airport where a young mother, stranded by bad weather, stood in line after line with her two-year-old daughter, trying to get a flight to her destination. She was two months pregnant and under doctor's orders not to carry her young child, who was exhausted and hungry. No one offered help, although several people made critical comments about her crying child. Then, the woman later reported:

"Someone came towards me and with a kindly smile said, 'Is there something I could do to help you?' With a grateful sigh I accepted his offer. He lifted my sobbing little daughter from the cold floor and lovingly held her to him while he patted her gently on the back. He asked if she could chew a piece of gum. When she was settled down, he carried her with him and said something kindly to the others in the line ahead of me, about how I needed their help. They seemed to agree and then he went up to the ticket counter [at the front of the line] and made arrangements with the clerk for me to be put on a flight leaving shortly. He walked with us to a bench, where we chatted a moment,

until he was assured that I would be fine. He went on his way. About a week later I saw a picture of Apostle Spencer W. Kimball and recognized him as the stranger at the airport." (*Our Heritage*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1996, 131).

The following incident is from the life and ministry of Gordon B. Hinckley.

"In 1998 a devastating hurricane caused great destruction in Central America. The Church sent large amounts of relief food and supplies. [Then] President Gordon B. Hinckley felt that he should [personally] go to Honduras and Nicaragua to meet with and encourage the people there. Later in Christmas devotional, President Hinckley spoke of a two-year-old girl he met on this trip who had been orphaned in the disaster. Her mother had died a few months before the hurricane, and when the hurricane hit, the father piled the furniture in his house to avoid the rising water.

"President Hinckley related that the father 'took a little mattress and placed it at the top and laid [his daughter] on it. In his frantic and desperate effort he suffered a stroke and died...No one knew anything of her, until a young man, two days later, happened to look up in that abandoned house and saw her still alive. He tenderly brought her down and delivered her to the bishop and the bishop's wife. It was there that we saw her...

"I would hope that at this Christmas season, when there will be no gift-giving among these devastated people, this small orphan girl might receive perhaps a little taste of candy, something sweet and delicious. I must see that that happens.

"God bless the people everywhere...that their hearts may be opened and their hands extended to help the needy." (*Church News*, 12 December 1998, 4).

*What impresses you about the actions of these prophets?

Despite the heavy burdens they carry regarding the administration of the Church, they take time from their duties to reach out and lift another who is in need. They do not seek recognition for their actions, but instead

perform their acts of kindness as an integral part of their daily lives.

*What can we learn from their examples?

They exemplify in their daily lives the example of the Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As He and they do, we, too, must do likewise.

How blessed we are to be led by a living prophet of God. Through their exemplary lives, they show us the way. They not only offer us counsel and guidance for our daily lives, but exemplify the teachings of the Savior in their lives. They are the Lord's mouthpiece upon the earth, and how grateful I am for their counsel, guidance, and example. As I follow and apply their words, my life has been blessed beyond measure. When I do not, I fail miserably and realize regret for my actions. I am so grateful for the blessing of repentance, which gives me the hope and strength to get up and try again.

IV. Conclusions

This lesson reminds us anew that we are among the Lord's blessed children. We belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. It is led by a living prophet. Through the Lord's prophet, we receive guidance and direction regarding the Lord's will. We receive His counsel and direction that enables us to have His Spirit to be with us. Our obedience enables us to safely live in a world that is becoming increasingly more wicked. We need not fear, though turmoil swirls around us, for we know the way to true happiness in this life and the life hereafter.

Our prophet today, like the prophets of old, speaks the words of God. He serves as the Lord's mouthpiece to guide us in these latter days. In the world in which we live, we are bombarded with the voice of experts who offer us often conflicting views regarding the issues of the day. At the same time, they appear to turn a deaf ear to all who seek to honor and follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. The false prophets are honored, while the true prophet is dismissed. It appears that we now live in a time the Prophet Isaiah described, when they "call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness;" (OT, Isaiah 5:20).

Our Need For A Living Prophet: We were taught by the Prophet Amos that there would come a time when a famine would occur. The people would then seek the word of the Lord, but would not be able to find it. (see OT, Amos 8:11-12.) We are blessed to have a prophet today, but many do not have the desire to find him or to listen when he speaks. Many are instead too busy following the false prophets who tell them what they want to hear.

The Roles Of A Living Prophet: We noted four roles fulfilled by a prophet. These are: (a) The prophet speaks for the Lord and reveals the Lord's will; (b) The prophet testifies of Jesus Christ and teaches the gospel; (c) The prophet is a seer; and, (d) The prophet presides over the Church. The Lord, not man, calls His prophet. He has watched over him and through his life prepared him for the day when he would guide His Church.

Heeding the Words Of A Living Prophet: As we listen to the counsel and direction of the Lord's prophet, it is "as if" the Lord were speaking Himself. Our obedience to his words will bring us direction to our lives. We will be able to avoid the pitfalls that Satan has laid in our path. Light will overcome darkness, and we will be protected.

Latter-Day Prophet's Examples of Christ-like Love: We noted the examples from the lives of Joseph Smith, Spencer W. Kimball, and Gordon B. Hinckley. In each, we learned of their compassion and care for others who were in need. Their lives truly reflected the example of the Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

It is imperative that we who have been blessed to have a prophet in our lives to guide and direct us, follow their direction and counsel. If we fail to do so, we will lose the light that serves to clearly mark the path back to our Heavenly Father. We Thank thee, O God, for a prophet.

Our next lesson [D&C#38] addresses the principles of spiritual and temporal welfare. We learn the importance of becoming self-reliant and of giving service to the poor and needy.