

# Gospel Doctrine Lesson 35: God Reveals His Secrets to His Prophets

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## Abstract

To teach class members that in the latter days, the Lord reveals his secrets to his prophets and pours out his Spirit on all people.

## Preliminary Thoughts

### Past Lessons

This year I have taught the following lessons:

- Lesson 14: *Ye Shall Be a Peculiar Treasure unto Me* (Exodus 15-20, 32-34)
- Lesson 28: *After the Fire a Still Small Voice* (1 Kings 17-19)
- Lesson 30: *Come to the House of the Lord* (2 Chronicles 29-30; 32; 34)

As I have prepared for and taught these lessons I have seen a clear message emerge from them that is coherent and powerful. Today's lesson continues in that process. I'm grateful to the Lord for showing me these things.

## Background Concepts and Ideas

The central scriptural source for this lesson is the well known verses in Amos 3:6-7

**6** *Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath done it?*

**7** *Surely the LORD GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.*

- It is important to start off right with these verses. The first big hint is that verse 7 is known as a Deuteronomistic verse (see 2 Kings 21:10). What does this mean?
- The word *Deuteronomy* comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible known as the Septuagint, and it means “*second law*” (see Deuteronomy 17:18). It was seen as reprise of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, though there are some parts that revise and challenge the earlier understanding of the law.
- Deuteronomistic theology is conceived of as a covenant (a treaty) between the Israelites and Jehovah, who has chosen the Israelites as His people, and requires Israel to live according to His law - referred to as Torah. The prophets were seen as the guardians of the law.
- To apply this to ourselves in our day (see 1 Nephi 19:23) we need to come to understand the Torah of Christ as revealed through the early Christian leaders after the time of Jesus (especially the Apostle Paul) and our own modern prophets (especially Joseph Smith). We will come to see that this was the **real** meaning of the Old Testament concept all along and has been re-revealed in our day.

## The Lord’s Secret Revealed

- One of the key words in the above scriptural text is the word “*secret*” (NB: notice that the word is singular and not plural).
- The Apostle Paul gives us some crucial insight to this concept as taught by *the revelations of Jesus Christ* in 1 Corinthians 2:6-10

*6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:*

*7 But we speak **the wisdom of God in a mystery**, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:*

*8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the **Lord of glory**.*

*9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

*10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*

I personally prefer the simpler language of the NRSV:

**6** Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish.

**7** But we speak God's wisdom, **secret and hidden**, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.

**8** None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

**9** But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him:—

**10** these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

- The word "secret" as used here gives us insight about how it used in Amos 3:7. The word in this context comes from the Greek word *mysterion* meaning "hidden thing, secrecy, mystery." The word has religious meaning with the idea that one must be initiated to a deeper understanding while it is hidden from the common man.
- Why did God decree this secret **for our glory**?
- Why does Paul additionally refer to Christ as **the Lord of glory**?
- These are hints. Paul guides us in coming to grok this inside meaning in the next verses.

**11** For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

**12** Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are **freely given to us of God**.

- See also verses 12 - 16.
- The Lord has taught this same lesson in our day in D&C 29 (verses which I have quoted again and again in my past lessons!)

**34** Wherefore, verily I say unto you that all things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal; neither any man, nor the children of men; neither Adam, your father, whom I created.

**35** Behold, I gave unto him that he should be an agent unto himself; and I gave unto him commandment, but no temporal commandment

*gave I unto him, for my commandments are spiritual; they are not natural nor temporal, neither carnal nor sensual.*

- The secret the Lord wishes to reveal to us is a deep - even hidden - ***spiritual*** secret. That is His nature. He wants us to understand Himself so that we can fully understand ourselves and our destiny. Our destiny concerns things unseen by the natural eye, unheard of by the natural ear, inconceivable to the natural man! In order to grasp the secret meaning we need to learn to see, ear, and think in a new and deeper way.

## Revisiting Past Lessons

- I have benefitted tremendously by tying these ideas to the past lessons that I have taught.

### Lesson 14

- From Lesson 14 we remember the following:
  - Exodus 19. The Lord desires to show His face to the children of Israel. He gives Moses a commandment to prepare them to come up on Mount Sinai to see Him. They refuse.
  - Exodus 19-20. The Lord meets with Moses on Mount Sinai and gives Israel the Ten Commandments.
  - Exodus 32-34. Moses receives stone tables containing instructions from the Lord but breaks them when he returns and sees the people worshipping a golden calf (31:18; 32:1-24). The Lord takes the ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood from Israel and gives them a lesser law, the law of Moses (JST, Exodus 34:1-2). Moses hews new tablets of stone to replace those that he has broken, but the new tablets do not include “the words of the everlasting covenant of the holy priesthood” (Exodus 34:1-51 JST, Deuteronomy 10:2). The people covenant to obey the law of Moses (34:10-35).
- In Lesson 14 I quoted from D&C 84 extensively. Here we remind ourselves:
  - D&C 84:18-22. The greater priesthood holds the **key of the knowledge of God**
  - D&C 84:23-25. Mosel plainly taught these things, but they hardened their hearts and the Lord takes Moses from their presence.

**19** *And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the **mysteries** of the kingdom, even the **key of the knowledge of God**.*

*20 Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.*

- The mysteries of God are made manifest in the ordinances of greater priesthood!

## Lesson 28

- Lesson 28 was about the activities of the powerful prophet Elijah.
- 1 Kings 19. Elijah goes to Horeb (or Sinai) and receives a manifestation of the Lord.

*11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake.*

*12 And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire **a still small voice.***

- The meaning of this teaching is clear: do not look for God in the world, but within you!
- I love this quotation from Meister Eckhart: “*God desires nothing more from you than a quiet heart.*”
- Jesus reinforced this lesson in Luke 17 to a group of Pharisees who demanded that if he were a king that he show them his kingdom. He responds as follows:

*20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation:*

*21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, **the kingdom of God is within you.***

- We also remember that, sadly, Elijah slaughters the Priests of Baal (1 Kings 18:40).
- When James and John wished to call down fire from heaven upon an unwelcoming village in the manner of Elijah, Jesus rebuked them (Luke 9:54-55).
- This is instructive regarding the proper role of a prophet!

## Lesson 30

- In Lesson 30 my challenge to you was this:
  - What would it mean to *conceive of the temple as a teaching*?
  - Here we also cited D&C 84 extensively and referred back to Moses and the children of Israel and Jehovah on Mount Sinai
  - I challenged you to look within yourselves for the sacred ground upon which to come unto God to meet Him face to face
  - I challenged you to seek God *in the higher reaches of the inner being*.
  - We referred to this as the *cosmic mountain*: the sacred counterpart to Sinai/Horeb.
  - We quoted from 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

**16** *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*

- The Philosopher Jacob Needleman has written:

*Here we are squarely in front of the invitation to open our doors to the gods. The question confronts us in this way: How to regard the ideas about human nature and the universal world that lie at the heart of the great spiritual teachings and philosophies of the world? And what kind of struggle is needed for us to live our lives according to these teachings? The hidden aspect of the “great wisdom” is not so much a matter of which ideas are comprised by it as it is the nature of the difficulty in putting these ideas into practice.*
- The hidden secret has to do with a true understanding of our divine spiritual nature.

## The Role of Prophets Reviewed

- The role of the prophet is to do as Moses did: prepare the people to see God’s face on their own.
- Jesus Christ came to save men’s lives, not to destroy them!
- C.S. Lewis til we have faces.

## A Warning Given in Modern Times

- An important warning has been given in modern times in D&C 121:39-42.
  - D&C 121:39. It is the nature of almost all men to exercise unrighteous dominion.

- D&C 121:40. Many are called, but few are chosen.
- D&C 121:41-42. Persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, and love unfeigned is proper order of the priesthood of God! Also kindness and pure knowledge.
- If you think this does not apply to Old Testament prophets, or the prophets in our day then you have not done your homework! The Lord gave this warning for a purpose.
- Sometimes we have a tendency towards genuflection and a tendency to deify our leaders in our culture.
- Of course, our leaders should be supported and given proper respect!

## The Role of Prophets Continued

- Moses demonstrates the attitude of a genuine prophet in Numbers 11:29.

*29 And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!*

- In Revelations 19:10 we read that *the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*
- The Prophet Joseph Smith has said:

*"God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them, for the day must come when no man need say to his neighbor, Know ye the Lord; for all shall know Him . . . from the least to the greatest." (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith - Chapter 22).*

- In our day we have a Prophet - President Nelson who is fulfilling this role!
- The following are quotation from President Nelson's most recent talk *Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives.*

*In coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost.*

*Follow the example of the Prophet Joseph. Find a quiet place where you can regularly go. Humble yourself before God. Pour out your heart to your Heavenly Father. Turn to Him for answers and for comfort.*

*Pray in the name of Jesus Christ about your concerns, your fears, your weaknesses—yes, the very longings of your heart. And then listen! Write the thoughts that come to your mind. Record your feelings and follow through with actions that you are prompted to take. As you repeat this process day after day, month after month, year after year, you will “grow into the principle of revelation.”*

*Does God really want to speak to you? Yes! “As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course . . . as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints.”*

\_\_You don’t have to wonder about what is true.<sup>11</sup> You do not have to wonder whom you can safely trust. Through personal revelation, you can receive your own witness that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, that Joseph Smith is a prophet, and that this is the Lord’s Church. Regardless of what others may say or do, no one can ever take away a witness borne to your heart and mind about what is true. \_\_After

*I urge you to stretch beyond your current spiritual ability to receive personal revelation, for the Lord has promised that “if thou shalt [seek], thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal.”*

- President Nelson also quotes Elder Neal A. Maxwell:

*As Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught, “To those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, it is clear that the Father and the Son are giving away the secrets of the universe!”*

## Conclusion - You Shall Comprehend Even God

- We return to D&C 88.
  - D&C 88:6-13. All things are controlled and governed by the light of Christ.
  - D&C 88:36-41. All kingdoms are governed by law.
  - D&C 88:42-45. God hath given a law unto all things.
  - D&C 88:46-50. Man shall comprehend even God.

**11** *And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quikeneth your understandings;*



**12** Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space.

**13** The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things.

**41** He comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things; and all things are by him, and of him, even God, forever and ever.

- This expresses an understanding of God that is called *panentheism*. This is an Ancient Greek word meaning all-in-God. It is the belief that God is greater than the universe and includes and interpenetrates it.
- With this as background we can be initiated into the hidden meaning, the great secret. We have to learn to see, hear, and think in a new way!

**46** Unto what shall I liken these kingdoms, that ye may understand?

**47** Behold, all these are kingdoms, and any man who hath seen any or the least of these hath seen God moving in his majesty and power.

**48** I say unto you, he hath seen him; nevertheless, he who came unto his own was not comprehended.

**49** The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not; nevertheless, the day shall come when you shall comprehend even God, being quickened in him and by him.

**50** Then shall ye know that ye have seen me, that I am, and that I am the true light that is in you, and that you are in me; otherwise ye could not abound.

## Appendix: Additional Quotes & Thoughts

- Jacob Needleman from his book *The Wisdom of Love*:  
*... mankind is enmeshed in a vast living cosmos containing levels of mind and purpose that far exceed what we normally experience as our own capacity of thought and will. Moreover, **this whole cosmic order is reflected psyche**. The vertical structure of the inner world is as immense as the vertical structure of the universe itself. **We are unknown to ourselves**. We live not only, as modern science tells us, in a tiny corner of the universe of matter; we live in a tiny*

*restricted corner of our own inner universe as well. The teachings of the great traditions thus complement the findings of modern science and show us mankind as an intersection between two infinities - each one beckoning to us, but both together comprising the role that mankind is meant to occupy the whole scheme of things.*

*We are meant to live in two infinities at once - one leading us outward toward action in the world around us; the other calling us to open ourselves to the world within us. All the teachings agree: our capacity to live meaningfully, wisely, and compassionately depends entirely on our openness to the **higher reaches of the inner world.***

- The Jewish philosopher Martin Buber gave us a unique way to conceive of these things.
- He spoke about the difference between I-It and I-Thou relations. D&C 88 helps us to understand our existence in the universe as a cosmic I-Thou relation. The ultimate Thou is God. When we are yoked with Christ the I-Thou relation to God transforms us into beings like He is.