

them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

"For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?

"And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?" . . . (Matthew 5:44, 46-47.)" (*Faith Precedes the Miracle*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1972, p. 203).

Developing this level of charity cannot happen without help from our Heavenly Father. That is why Mormon asks us to pray earnestly—so that we might be filled with charity, which he calls "the pure love of Christ" (Moro, 7:47).

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure" (v. 48).

Our Heavenly Father has given us commandments to help us become as he is. Being filled with charity and acting in a charitable way toward others help us reach our potential. Without charity, we are nothing (see v. 46).

When the Prophet Joseph Smith was a prisoner in Liberty Jail, he received important instructions on how Heavenly Father's children are to treat each other: "Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all" (D&C 121:45). The Prophet, who knew well the suffering that can come from the uncharitable acts of others; taught the Saints that love can become a powerful motivation: "Love is one of the chief

characteristics of Deity, and ought to be manifested by those who aspire to be the sons of God. A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race" (*Teachings of*

the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 174).

Charity for others comes in the doing, the serving, and the praying. We can have charity for all because our Heavenly Father has given us, his children, the ability and because his Son has shown us the way.

Why didn't Jews in Old Testament times believe Jerusalem could be destroyed?

Response by Fred E. Woods, a religion instructor at Ricks College, and first counselor in the bishopric of the Rexburg Tenth Ward, Rexburg Idaho East Stake.

In the Book of Mormon, Nephi says Laman and Lemuel did not "believe that Jerusalem, that great city, could be destroyed according to the words of the prophets. And they were like unto the Jews who were at Jerusalem" (1 Me. 2:13).

Three factors contributed to the Jews' belief that Jerusalem would not be destroyed: first, historical tradition pertaining to "Jerusalem, that great city" (1 Ne. 2:13); second, the Jews' misunderstanding of promises the Lord made to David; and third, the miraculous preservation of the Jews when the Assyrians besieged Jerusalem in the days of King Hezekiah.

HISTORICAL TRADITION

Jerusalem is initially identified in the Old Testament as "Salem" (Gen. 14:18), from which the name Jerusalem ("City of Peace") derives. Jerusalem was the holy city

of the righteous high priest Melchizedek, who blessed Abraham (see Gen. 14:18-19). Under Melchizedek, the "people wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven, and sought for the city of Enoch which God had before taken" (JST, Gen. 14:34).

MISUNDERSTANDING THE PROMISES OF THE LORD

When the children of Israel emerged from their captivity in Egypt, the Jebusites possessed the land and city of Jerusalem (see Judg. 1:21). Because the Israelites had broken their covenants with the Lord, they were unable to drive out the Jebusites following the death of Joshua (see Judg. 2:20-21). Israel did not regain possession of the city until King David and his men (see 2 Sam. 5:6-9) conquered the Jebusites after selecting Jerusalem as the capital.

Later, David desired to build a house "unto the name of the Lord," but he was directed not to do so (see 1 Chr. 22:7-8). Instead, the Lord told David that his son, Solomon, would build the temple. The Lord made David this promise: "I will appoint a place

for my people Israel, will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime" (2 Sam. 7:10).

When construction of the temple began, the Lord, speaking to Solomon, clarified the conditions of this promise: "//thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them; *then* will I perform my word with thee, which I spake unto David thy father:

"And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel" (1 Kgs. 6:12-13; emphasis added).

Israel, however, broke the covenant through disobedience. The kingdom was divided, and in 721 B.C. the Assyrians took the Israelites from the northern kingdom into captivity. Two decades later, the Assyrians, led by King Sennacherib, returned and took possession of much of the southern kingdom of Judah.

THE MIRACULOUS PRESERVATION OF THE JEWS

"Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them" (2 Kgs. 18:13). The Assyrian Prism Inscription of King Sennacherib sheds further light on this biblical account: "As for Hezekiah, the fudaeen, who had not submitted to my yoke, I besieged forty-six of his fortified walled cities and surrounding small towns... I conquered [them]___Himself, I locked him up within Jerusalem, his royal city, like a bird in a cage"

(Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, "II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary," *Anchor Bible*, ed. W. F. Albright and D. N. Freedman, 44 vols., Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1984, 11:338).

The Bible says King Hezekiah, who had returned righteousness to Judah, went to the temple to plead with the Lord for protection. In answer to his prayer, the Lord told Hezekiah that his petition would be granted: "For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine 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 an hundred fourscore and five thousand" (2 Kgs. 19:34-35).

This miraculous display of divine intervention had a tremendous impact on future generations, particularly on those who dwelt securely in Jerusalem from the time following this deliverance in 701 B.C. until the Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. Jerusalem's deliverance led to the erroneous belief that the holy city was impregnable. The Jews believed the city enjoyed divine protection, even if they did not abide the law of the covenant. Isaiah observed, "They call themselves of the holy city, but they do not stay themselves upon the God of Israel" (Isa. 48:2).

"There came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed" (1 Ne. 1:4). Prophets like Lehi and Jeremiah were threatened with death when they spoke what many Jews considered to be blasphemous words against the holy city.

Priests and false prophets said of Jeremiah, "This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears" (Jen 26:11). Jeremiah responded, "The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city.. .

"Therefore now, amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and repent, and the Lord will turn away the evil that he hath pronounced against you" (JST, Jen 26:12-13).

Judah did not repent. The great city and the holy temple were destroyed, and the Jews were exiled. The chosen people forgot that the Lord is bound only when they do what he says (see D&C 82:10). The peace that prevailed in Salem during Melchizedek's day and the divine intervention Jerusalem enjoyed during the reign of Hezekiah were conditioned only on obedience to the covenants.



A mistaken perception existed: the people believed that Jerusalem enjoyed divine protection, even if they did not abide the law of the covenant.

ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT A. MCKAY