Lesson 43

Romans 13
Verse 12: What night or era of darkness might Paul have been speaking of? What day did he see dawning? Reading this from our own position in history, when was the night and what was the dawn? Is that rereading of the scriptures from our own position and apart from the original meaning justified? Why not, if it is not? How so, if it is?

Ephesians 4
Verse 29: Because the King James English may be slightly difficult to understand, consider an alternate translation: “Do not let any evil talk come out of your mouth, but [instead] what is good for building others up as they need, so that [what you say] will give benefit to those who listen.”

Ephesians 6
Verse 11: Paul is using the metaphor of battle in these verses, so the metaphor of armor makes sense. What does
it mean that in this battle the weapons used against us are wiles, in other words, schemes?

**Verse 12:** Here is another translation of verse 12. It may help make more sense of it: “For we are wrestling not with flesh and blood [enemies], but with governments, with those who have authority, with the rulers of this world’s darkness, with spiritual wickedness in the heavens.”

If the battle is a spiritual one, what governments and authorities might Paul have in mind? Who might he be referring to as those who rule this world’s darkness, and how is that a spiritual battle? When he speaks of spiritual wickedness in the heavens, what might he have in mind? Does Paul have a particular enemy in mind, or is he describing the breadth of the spiritual battle?

**Verse 13:** What point is Paul making when he tells us to take “the whole armour of God”? Some translators believe that “splendid armor” is a better translation. What difference in understanding would that alternate translation make to you?

Note: There is a wordplay in English that translates a similar wordplay in Greek: *withstand* and *stand*. If we have God’s armor, then we can withstand the wiles of the devil, and if we withstand the wiles of the devil, then we will remain standing. In other words, we will not be defeated.

Does the phrase “having done all” describe what we have done to prepare for the battle, or does it describe what we do in the battle?
Verses 14–17: Truth, righteousness, the preparation of the gospel of peace (which means?), faith, and the Spirit (or word of God): how does each of these in particular prepare us to fight against the powers of darkness?

Here are some other translations of what the King James Version renders as “the preparation of the gospel of peace”:

“the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace” (Today’s New International Version)

“the preparation of the good news of peace” (The Lexham English Bible)

“whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace” (New Revised Standard Version)

“the eagerness to spread the gospel of peace” (Jerusalem Bible)

“in readiness for the gospel of peace” (The New American Bible)

Obviously the phrase presents translators with some of the same difficulties understanding the Greek that we have understanding the English. Looking at some of the alternatives and using your own ability to think about how best to understand the verse, what do you think the phrase means?

Why does Paul say that the Spirit and the word of God are the same? What does he mean?

2 Nephi 1

Verse 23: When Paul uses the metaphor of armor, righteousness is one of that armor’s components. Does it
matter to Lehi’s point that he is using the metaphor of armor differently than did Paul, that for him righteousness is the whole armor?

Lehi’s metaphor seems to come in an odd order. In the natural order, one would have to shake off the chains of oppression and then stand up. After that he could put on armor. Why do you think Lehi put things in this order rather than in the natural order?

What chains are binding Lehi’s sons? In what sense are they in obscurity? Does the 1828 definition of obscurity help answer that: “darkness”?

In much of scripture “coming out of the dust” is a metaphor for coming forth from the dead. Is that the metaphor at work here? If so, why?

**Doctrine and Covenants 27**

As you read these verses, pay particular attention to how the Lord expands what Paul has written. What differences in meaning do those expansions create?

**Verse 15:** This verse begins with wherefore, indicating that what follows is a consequence of what was said in the previous verse or verses. How is what follows connected to what came before? Is it a logical consequence, for example, a consequence of righteous life, . . . ?

Literally, to gird up one’s loins is to put a wide leather belt (a girdle) around one’s waist (the loins). People did this to prepare for work and for war, as well as for officiating in
the offices of the temple priesthood. So what is the import of “lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins”? What evil day does this verse have in mind? Why do you think that this version of this injunction leaves out “that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil”? Why does it omit Paul’s claim that this is a spiritual rather than a physical battle, a spiritual battle against corrupt governments, authorities, and so on?

Does the phrase “having done all” describe what we have done to prepare for the battle, or does it describe what we do in the battle?

**Verse 16:** By adding “which I have sent mine angels to commit unto you,” this verse emphasizes “the preparation of the gospel of peace,” suggesting that the phrase is particularly important. That means that it is important to decide what you think it means.

**Verse 18:** Paul identifies the Spirit and the word. This revelation through Joseph Smith divides them: the Spirit is one thing we must take (and it will be poured out on us), and the word is another thing we must take. What difference does that make between the meaning of what Paul says and the meaning of what Joseph says?

Joseph Smith’s revelation adds, “be agreed as touching all things whatsoever ye ask of me.” If the Lord were Santa Claus, it would be all right that “Johnny wants a pair of skates; Suzy wants a dolly.” But the Lord is not Santa Claus. He wants us to agree as to what we ask for. Why is that necessary? How do we create that agreement?
What does it mean to be caught up? To where? How?
At what day is it important that “where I am ye shall be also”?

**Doctrine and Covenants 42**

*Verses 21–24:* These verses mention three sins: lying, lust, and adultery. It is clear why the second and third belong together, but why is lying included with them as the first mentioned in the group?

Is there a natural progression of these sins?

**Doctrine and Covenants 51**

*Verse 9:* Does “deal honestly” state the general expectation, with “be alike among this people” and “receive alike” giving us the specifics of what that means? Or are these simply three different expectations?

What does it mean to “be alike among this people”? What does it mean to “receive alike”? Presumably “among this people” is understood in the second phrase.

This commandment was given during a time when the law of consecration was being first taught and included the consecration of all one’s property to the Church. How do we fulfill that commandment today when, though we still covenant ourselves to live consecrated lives, we do not do so by giving all of what we own to the Church and receiving back a portion?

**Doctrine and Covenants 52**

*Verse 16:* What does it mean to be a speaker with a contrite spirit? The word *contrite* means literally “worn or bruised.”
How would we know that a speaker was contrite? Need we know that, or is it enough for the speaker to seek to be that?

What does it mean for a speaker’s language to be meek (mild, soft, gentle)? Does that mean we should never speak the truth with power and authority? Or are the two perhaps possible at the same time? If the latter, how so?

What does it mean for a speaker’s language to edify (to instruct, to build up, to improve)? Who should it improve, him or his audience?

What does it mean to obey an ordinance? What ordinances does this verse refer to?

**Doctrine and Covenants 59**

*Verse 6:* Why does the Lord pick the three things from the Ten Commandments that he repeats here: theft, adultery, and murder? Does prefacing those three with the second great commandment tell us anything about how we ought to understand the Ten Commandments?

**Doctrine and Covenants 63**

*Verse 16:* We have seen most of the content of this verse before, but what do you make of the addition, “but shall deny the faith and shall fear”? Why does the Lord tell us that an adulterer will deny the faith? Isn’t it possible to commit adultery without doing so? And why does he add “shall fear”? Fear what?

*Verses 60–61:* Why should this particular name, Alpha and Omega (in other words, Beginning and End), make people beware how they take the Lord’s name on their lips?
To what does taking the Lord’s name on one’s lips refer? To cursing? To making covenants and prayers and performing ordinances in his name?

*Verses 62–63:* Does verse 62 answer the last question? Who might those be within the Church (as verse 63 suggests) who have used the Lord’s name without authority? Since this referred to people within the Church when it was given, rather than to people outside the Church, might it mean the same thing today? If so, who might such people in the Church be who use the Lord’s name but without authority?

**Doctrine and Covenants 76**

*Verses 25–27:* We often picture what happened in the pre-existence as the Son and Lucifer both presenting plans and the Father choosing between them, after which Lucifer rebelled against the Father. But here it says that he “rebelled against the Only Begotten Son whom the Father loved.” What do you make of that? Why did he rebel against the Son rather than against the Father?

The word *perdition* means “utter loss or ruin.” Verse 26 says that Lucifer received that name “for the heavens wept over him.” Why would their weeping result in that name?

What does “the heavens” refer to? What does the weeping of the heavens tell us about the Father’s relation to his children? What does it mean to say that Lucifer (which means “bringer of dawn”) was a son of the morning?
Verses 28–29: The name Satan means “accuser.” Why is that the name that scripture uses for Lucifer after his fall? Who does he accuse? To whom does he make his accusations?

The word devil comes from the Greek word diabolos, meaning “slanderer.” Whom does Satan slander?

How does Satan try to take God’s kingdom? Is that a metaphor, or is it meant literally?

How does Satan make war with the Saints? That is a metaphor, but it is a metaphor with a good deal of reality to it. Where do the battles of this war occur? How are we taught to fight them?

Doctrine and Covenants 97

Verse 8: How would we know that our hearts are honest, broken, and contrite? We are capable of easily lying to ourselves. How do avoid doing so in this case?

Can you say specifically what it means to obey our covenants by sacrifice?

What does it mean to be accepted of the Lord? How can we know that we are accepted?

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Verse 45: To what does the word bowels refer in scripture? To figure that out, look up other uses of the term in the Bible and the Book of Mormon. Which ones of them teach us something about how the Lord is using the word? What is the Lord commanding us when he commands us that our bowels be full of charity?
Why does the Lord tell us that we must have charity toward all men and, then, that we should also have charity toward the household of faith? Doesn’t the phrase “all men” include the household of faith?

We tend to think of garnish as the parsley a cook adds to the plate to fancy it up a little bit. So to garnish something is to add that little bit of decoration. In that case, we are commanded to decorate our thoughts with charity. But in the early nineteenth century, when this was written, the word garnish also meant “to supply; as a fort garnished troops” (Webster’s 1828 dictionary). What new meaning does using that older meaning of the word give to this verse?

We often use the word virtue to refer to moral cleanliness, particularly to chastity. But it also has a broader meaning: “strength, valor, moral goodness in general, moral excellence.” How does using that broader meaning change the meaning of this verse?

What is the doctrine of the priesthood?

What does the metaphor “distil upon thy soul as the dews for heaven” teach us?

Verses 46: What does having the Holy Ghost as our constant companion require according to these verses?

Assuming that “thy scepter” is a metaphor, for what is it a metaphor? Are scepter and dominion intended to be parallel and, therefore, to mean the same thing? What dominion are we promised?

What does it mean to have a dominion flow to one? What does it mean for it to do so “without compulsory means”? 266
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Verse 21: What does the commandment “Keep yourselves from evil to take the name of the Lord in vain” mean? The grammar is unusual. Does that unusual grammar cause it to mean something other than what we would expect, namely “Don’t do something evil by taking the name of the Lord in vain”?

Why is the commandment justified or explained by reminding us that he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

Verse 24: Does drunkenness have anything other than its ordinary meaning? What would it mean for our words to tend to edify one another?

Moses 4

Verses 3–4: What could it possibly mean to destroy the agency of human beings? Is it really something that can be taken away? But if it cannot be taken away, then how could Satan have tried to destroy it?

What power did Satan seek to take from the Father?

Does the description of Satan’s work in verse 4 tell us how Satan destroys human agency? Do those who are deceived by Satan have no agency? What does it mean to be captive to the will of Satan?