

Darkness
Lawrence E. Corbridge
“Stand Forever” Episode 7

Alone, without God, darkness prevails. Hello, my name is Larry Corbridge, and this is Episode 7 of the *Stand Forever Series*.

In the last episode we considered chaos as one dimension of the natural state of things without God, without His greatest gifts, His Son, His Spirit, and His Life. Today we consider another dimension of the natural state of things, darkness.

Darkness

Alone, without God, darkness prevails. The natural state of the universe is darkness. Except for the tree of life, Lehi’s dream is a dark dream. Darkness is a prominent feature. He was in a “dark and dreary waste.” He “traveled for many hours in darkness,”¹ and even for those who found the path and the rod of iron there arose a great mist of darkness to obscure their way.² The natural state is darkness.

After forming the heavens and the earth, “darkness reigned upon the face of the deep and the Spirit of the Gods was brooding upon the face of the waters. And they (the Gods) said: Let there be light; and there was light.”³ Light dispelled the darkness from off the face of the earth. Light dispels darkness, but not the other way around.

Darkness cannot extinguish light. If you are filled with light “there shall be no darkness in you.”⁴

“Light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space. 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.”⁵

Without God, there is no light, and darkness prevails. That is true for all of us individually and spiritually as it is universally and physically.

¹ 1 Nephi 8:7, 8

² 1 Nephi 8:23

³ Abraham 4:1-3

⁴ Doctrine and Covenants 88:67

⁵ Doctrine and Covenants 88:12, 13

Darkness exists only in the absence of light. It is, what is without light, but don't think of darkness as inert, at least not in the spiritual sense. Jesus referred to "the power of darkness."⁶ In our day, the Lord said, "For all flesh is corrupted before me; and the powers of darkness prevail upon the earth, among the children of men."⁷ In one of the accounts of the First Vision, Joseph Smith described "the powers of darkness" that combined against him, saying he was "seized upon by some power which entirely overcame (him)" and a "thick darkness gathered around (him)."⁸

The Darkness of Sin

Sin leads to darkness. When light dims, darkness emerges and in the dark we are lost and stumble. As said in Proverbs, when we "leave the paths of uprightness [we] walk in the ways of darkness."⁹ "The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble."¹⁰

A man scuffled with his wife, and in the aftermath of the struggle he was horrified by the darkness that followed. He said, "I was alone and afraid I would be eternally alone because of my actions. I despaired. I was very depressed emotionally and felt totally overcome with dark feelings and thoughts. The room I was in felt enveloped in darkness. I felt lost."

Isaiah said of people who do not "seek unto their God ... there is no light in them ... And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness."¹¹

Speaking of our day, Isaiah also said, "darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people."¹² "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God ... we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men."¹³ It is foolish to "wait for," hope for light while walking in darkness.

⁶ Luke 22:53

⁷ Doctrine and Covenants 38:11

⁸ JS History 1:15, 20

⁹ Proverbs 2:13

¹⁰ Proverbs 4:19

¹¹ Isaiah 8:19, 20, 21

¹² Isaiah 60:2

¹³ Isaiah 59:2, 9, 10

The Lord also said, "The light of the body is the eye ... if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"¹⁴

The Darkness of Ignorance and Unbelief

Ignorance and unbelief are also shrouded in darkness. "Enoch beheld, and lo, all the nations of the earth were before him; And there came generation upon generation ... and behold, the power of Satan was upon all the face of the earth. And he saw angels descending out of heaven; and he heard a loud voice saying: Wo, wo be unto the inhabitants of the earth. And he beheld Satan; and he had a great chain in his hand, and it veiled the whole face of the earth with darkness; and he looked up and laughed, and his angels rejoiced."

Satan "the prince of darkness"¹⁵ laughed and God wept. "And it came to pass that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept; and Enoch bore record of it, saying: How is it that the heavens weep, and shed forth their tears as the rain upon the mountains?

"The Lord said unto Enoch: Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency; And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood ... But behold, their sins shall be upon the heads of their fathers; Satan shall be their father, and misery shall be their doom; and the whole heavens shall weep over them, even all the workmanship of mine hands; wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these shall suffer?"¹⁶

What is the great chain in Satan's hand which covers the whole earth with darkness? Is it sin? Not entirely. Alma said, "[H]e that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full. And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction. Now **this is**

¹⁴ 3 Nephi 13:22, 23

¹⁵ JST, John 14:30

¹⁶ Moses 7: 23-26, 28, 29, 32, 33, 37

what is meant by the chains of hell.”¹⁷ It is also what Mormon calls “the dark veil of unbelief.”¹⁸

The Lord said to Isaiah, “my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst.”¹⁹

The “chains of hell” are forged by the links of ignorance or unbelief, the absence of knowledge of the word of God which is light.²⁰ The great and honorable of the world are “famished” without knowledge of the primary truths, and public opinion is also a dry well. People turn to Google to answer every question, but the Google well is also dry of answers to the most important questions.

The Darkness of Disbelief and Denial

Unbelief and disbelief are often used interchangeably, but they are different. Unbelief is the absence of belief, usually because of ignorance. Disbelief, however, is much darker; it is the unwillingness to believe or the rejection of truth. Unbelief is a vacuum; disbelief is rejection and, of the two, **disbelief is far more devastating**.

It is recorded in the Book of Moses that “Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters. And Satan came among them, saying: I am also a son of God: and he commanded them, saying: Believe it not (meaning what their parents Adam and Eve had taught them); and they believed it not, and they loved Satan more than God.”²¹ That’s disbelief. How does that happen so quickly? It can happen quickly because it is a choice.

Many do not believe, because they don’t want to believe. They adhere to the vacuum of the religion of disbelief, but nature abhors a vacuum and fallacy quickly fills the void.

When truth is attacked, little to nothing is offered to replace it except the stark, cold void of disbelief. It is belief by default, belief by elimination. They eliminate, push away and discount everything they don’t want to believe, everything that makes them uncomfortable, everything that does not jive with their notions and desires, and then

¹⁷ Alma 12:10, 11, *emphasis added*

¹⁸ Alma 19:6

¹⁹ Isaiah 5:13

²⁰ “For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” Doctrine and Covenants 84:45

²¹ Moses 5:12, 13

they look around and pick up anything that is left on the ground and put that in their little bag.

The Lord said he will “show no greater things” to those who contend against or deny His word.²² And even more troubling, He has said, “For behold, if ye deny the Holy Ghost when it once has had place in you, and ye know that ye deny it, behold, this is a sin which is unpardonable.”²³ I don’t know who and how many fall into that dark hole, but one thing is clear, there are severe consequences for turning against truth once revealed.

Darkness and death never fall so hard and cold as for those who deny truth once revealed by the Holy Ghost. The degree of darkness is probably commensurate with the degree of light denied, but the darkness of disbelief is deeper than the darkness of unbelief or sin. It is one thing to fall short of the truth, but it is far worse to deny it.

People who live a life of wild abandon usually do not deny the truth. They don’t live it, but they usually don’t deny it. They usually retain their testimony and know their course is off and when they come to their senses, they usually correct their course. But it is different for those who disbelieve and turn against the truth. More than those who get off course but honestly acknowledge it, darkness settles in. They ask no questions; they seek no answers. They quickly forget what they once knew and soon become a cold shell of their former self.

One person with a long history of immorality said, “after a couple of years passed, I realized the depth and power of my testimony would not allow me to stay away from the church. So, I began going faithfully. I broke off the relationship with the other person and started on the road to be rebaptized and to see if I might eventually be found worthy to have my blessings restored.”

That is a typical account. I have wondered why the flame of knowledge and conviction is not extinguished with ongoing sin for some while others become embittered, lose knowledge, and the flame dies? They grow cold and never return. What makes the difference?

There are only two options when off course: one is to acknowledge the deviation, the other is to deny it. The first is a recognition or acknowledgement of truth even while not living it. The second is denial; it attempts to justify sin by refusing to even

²² Ether 4:8

²³ Alma 39:6

acknowledge it. The Lord continues to reach out to those who are honestly off course, to nudge them back. While I don't think the Lord refuses to speak to those who deny Him, they refuse to listen. That's the problem, and it's devastating.

Nephi recorded: "But, behold, my beloved brethren, thus came the voice of the Son unto me, saying: After ye have repented of your sins, and witnessed unto the Father that ye are willing to keep my commandments, by the baptism of water, and have received the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, and can speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the tongue of angels, and after this should deny me, it would have been better for you that ye had not known me."²⁴

Nephi also spoke about "many" who harden their hearts against the Holy Spirit, saying, "But behold, there are many that harden their hearts against the Holy Spirit; that it hath no place in them; wherefore, **they cast many things away which are written** [in our day, think about the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, the Bible and the words of living prophets] **and esteem them as things of naught.**"²⁵

Mormon adds "that after a people have been once enlightened by the Spirit of God, and have had great knowledge of things pertaining to righteousness, and then have fallen away into sin and transgression, they become more hardened, and thus their state becomes worse than though they had never known these things."²⁶

Jacob links denial of the Holy Ghost with a "hardened heart." "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I beseech of you in words of soberness that ye would repent, and come with full purpose of heart, and cleave unto God as he cleaveth unto you. And while his arm of mercy is extended towards you in the light of the day, **harden not your hearts** Yea, today, if ye will hear his voice, **harden not your hearts**; for why will ye die?"²⁷

A "hardened heart" is a primary consequence of disbelief. What does it mean to harden one's heart? It calls to mind the now famous struggle of Justice Potter Stewart of the United States Supreme Court who said although it is difficult to define hard-core pornography, "I know it when I see it."²⁸ While a "hardened heart" may be difficult to define, you know it when you see it.

²⁴ 2 Nephi 31:14

²⁵ 2 Nephi 33:2, *emphasis added*

²⁶ Alma 24:30

²⁷ Jacob 6:6

²⁸ *Jacobellis v. Ohio*, 378 U.S. 184 (1964)

The healthy heart in the spiritual sense is an open heart. It is open to limitless possibilities. It is open to the reality that reality is immensely greater than the little we know and experience, the reality that our experience is barely a speck in the broad expanse of the universe, and that our perception is extremely limited. A healthy heart is open to the reality that with God all things are possible.

A healthy heart is open to the voice and Spirit of the Lord. Paul said, "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."²⁹ A hard heart is a closed heart. It is closed to anything that does not fit neatly within one's preferences or experience and knowledge. It is closed to a vast universe of limitless possibilities bound as the ant who thinks the entire universe is its hill and the patch of ground around it. Dark and dire consequences flow from a hard heart and rejecting the words of the prophets.

Speaking of our day, an angel told Nephi, "For the time cometh, saith the Lamb of God, that I will work a great and a marvelous work among the children of men; a work which shall be everlasting, either on the one hand or on the other — either to the convincing of them unto peace and life eternal, or unto the deliverance of them to the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds unto their being brought down into captivity, and also into destruction, both temporally and spiritually, according to the captivity of the devil, of which I have spoken."³⁰

Jacob asked, "For behold, after ye have been nourished by the good word of God all the day long, ... will ye reject these words? Will ye reject the words of the prophets; and will ye reject all the words which have been spoken concerning Christ, after so many have spoken concerning him; and deny the good word of Christ, and the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and quench the Holy Spirit, and make a mock of the great plan of redemption, which hath been laid for you?"³¹

Will you? Will you go away or will you stand forever?

The Darkness of Deception

Deception also leads to darkness. One of the great challenges of life is to see clearly and not be deceived. Satan is "the father of all lies, to deceive and blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as [do] not hearken unto [God's] voice."³²

²⁹ Hebrews 4:7

³⁰ 1 Nephi 14:7

³¹ Jacob 6:7, 8

³² Moses 4:4

Beginning with “Ye shall not surely die,” deception and confusion are as much Satan’s intent as temptation, and temptation usually follows the other two.³³

Except for the life and mission of the Holy Messiah, probably nothing has been more clearly prophesied and described than this time, our time, the last days. Those two—the Savior and the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times—are the primary prophetic focal points from the beginning of time, and we live, breathe and do in the second one.

Considering what has been prophesied, we should not be surprised but never complacent by what unfolds around us. Here is only a small portion of what was foreseen that we now see in real-time:

- “Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made.”³⁴
- “And many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many.”³⁵
- “For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ: and shall deceive many.”³⁶
- “And there shall be signs ... and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity ... men’s hearts failing them for fear.”³⁷
- “In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”³⁸
- “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”³⁹
- “Know this also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away ... Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth ... men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.”⁴⁰
- “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.”⁴¹

³³ Genesis 3:4

³⁴ Isaiah 2:9

³⁵ Matthew 24:11

³⁶ Mark 13:6

³⁷ Luke 21:25, 26

³⁸ 1 Timothy 4:1

³⁹ 1 Timothy 4:1

⁴⁰ 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 7, 10

⁴¹ 2 Timothy 3:12, 13

When the Lord described the signs of His coming and the end of the world, when He described our day, He also mentioned wars and rumors of wars, nations rising against nations, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, and especially deception: “For in those days [this day] there shall also arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch, that, if possible, they shall deceive the very elect, who are the elect according to the covenant.”⁴²

Those prophecies are not general in nature, speaking of tendencies of people over time; they are prophecies specific to our day, this day. And so, when you see others who “depart from the faith” do not be shaken or surprised. It was specifically predicted long ago in order that you not be shaken or surprised but reassured in your own conviction as you see the word of God fulfilled before your very eyes.

A “false Christ” is more than a person; it may be an idea, a principle (even a true principle), lifestyle or obsession on anything above God. It includes anything or anyone that becomes the North Star, the basis for making choices instead of or above God Our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ or distracts from worship of them.

“False prophets” include anyone advocating obeisance to anyone or anything above God Our Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His gospel.

I’m not sure of all implied by the qualification “if possible, they shall deceive the very elect,” but I think it means, at least, that everyone will be challenged in our day, even the very elect.

There are many who deceive, and the spectrum of deception is broad. At one end we meet those who attack the Restoration, the Prophet Joseph Smith, and The Book of Mormon. Next, we see those who believe in the Restoration but claim the Church is deficient and has gone astray. There are others who also claim to believe in the Restoration but are disillusioned with doctrine that conflicts with the shifting attitudes of our day. There are some who, without authority, lay claim to visions, dreams, and visitations to right the ship, guide us to a higher path, or prepare the Church for the end of the world. Others are deceived by false spirits. At the far end of the spectrum, we come to an entire universe of distractions.

Never has there been more information, misinformation, and disinformation, more stars to which your wagon may be hitched, more goods, gadgets, and games, more options,

⁴² JS—Matthew 1:22; See also Matthew 24:24

places to go, things to see and do to occupy time and attention away from what is most important. And all of that and much more is disseminated instantaneously throughout the world by electronic media.

From one extreme to the other, we live in the dispensation of the fullness of times. Everything is before us, the full spectrum from the depths of darkness and evil to supernal splendor, brilliance, beauty, magnificence, grandeur, glory and exaltation, and everything in between.

Jesus said: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven [things of eternal value], where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."⁴³

Never in the history of the world has this instruction to pursue the ultimate treasures of eternal value been more critical or timely than today. Never has it been easier to get lost in little things. We call most of those things "diversions" and rightly so, because in fact they divert us from things of greatest importance. In such a flood of information and things, the challenge is not only to sift between good and evil, rather sort between the mundane and the monumental as well. There isn't much that matters greatly in this life, but there are a few things that are monumentally important, even more important than life.

We are prone to deception and often cannot see far ahead. On our own, we don't know where to go or what to do. We easily lose our way and become lost in the dark. The challenge to see clearly and not be deceived has never been greater. This is a day of deception.

In summary, sin, unbelief, disbelief, and deception are all factors that contribute to darkness. Without God, darkness prevails. The essential problem in life is separation from God our Father.

⁴³ Matthew 6:19-24