

Section 45

Joseph Smith bought a King James Version of the Bible at Egbert Grandin's Palmyra, New York, bookstore while the Book of Mormon was being printed upstairs. Shortly after the Church was restored in 1830, Joseph's main task became revising this Bible. He called the revision his new translation. He began with Genesis and received by revelation much restored scripture, including the Book of Moses that is now in the Pearl of Great Price.

The Book of Moses explains how Enoch led his people to unitedly eliminate poverty and live with one heart and one mind "in process of time" (Moses 7:21). One imagines that by March 1831 Joseph was slogging through less compelling parts of the Old Testament, trying to stay awake while reading about who begat whom and so on and so forth. Joseph's history says,

False reports, lies, and fo[olish] stories were published in the newspapers, and circulated in every direction, to prevent people from investigating the work, or embracing the faith. . . . But to the joy of the saints who had to struggle against every thing that prejudice and wickedness could invent, I received the following,

referring to section 45.¹

Section 45 is an unusual revelation. It is a commentary on one of the most complicated and even contested passages of the Bible. That's not remarkable. There is no shortage of interpreters of Jesus's Olivet discourse. The remarkable thing is that the interpreter in section 45 is the Savior himself. This is the finest text in the world for understanding Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. One could go to any number of commentaries on Matthew 24 and find all kinds of analysis. These would be helpful, perhaps, but section 45 is the only source on earth in which the Savior of the world interprets and applies his own Olivet discourse.

Section 45 cements a connection between the Old Testament, New Testament, and the restoration of the gospel through Joseph Smith. The Savior who reveals it is the "God of Enoch," about whom Joseph has recently learned so much in his revision of Genesis and reception of the Book of Moses. The Savior gave the discourse to his disciples on the Mount of Olives, and here he is in Section 45 interpreting and applying it to the Latter-day Saints.

Section 45 laces together the dispensations of Enoch, the Savior and his apostles, and the fullness of times. Overwhelming wickedness and pending calamities are common themes in each. Always the outnumbered righteous seek safety, peace, and refuge. They seek Zion. Section 45 gives coherence to the past, present, and future. One sees in it the Lord's plans and purposes being accomplished.

At the point of highest tension in the Savior's discourse, just as he is explaining to the apostles about the extreme wickedness, violence, and calamities that are coming, he interjects to say that at that point the apostles "were troubled." Then he restores part of the sermon missing from the Bible, a part that makes sense of all the rest: "I said unto them: Be not troubled, for, when all these things shall come to pass, ye may know that the promises which have been made unto you shall be fulfilled" (D&C 45:34–35). Without revelations like this one, the world might seem like a violent, purposeless mess. With it, one need not be troubled, for one can see that Zion rises in contrast to

¹ "[History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 \[23 December 1805–30 August 1834\]](#)," p. 104, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 28, 2020.

the world and that calamities portend the fulfillment of Christ's promises that Zion is about to be established.

Section 45 justifies optimism in the face of evil and tumult. Sister Patricia Holland told about her fears when anxiety became widespread and acute after a genocide in Kosovo, a school massacre in Colorado, murders in the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, damage resulting from a terrible storm that hit her home, and the pending dawn of the year 2000. Over the howling wind she asked her apostle husband, Jeffrey R. Holland, if these events were the ones prophesied to immediately precede the Savior's second coming. "No," he replied, "but wouldn't it be wonderful if they were."²

² Patricia T. Holland, "God's Covenant of Peace," in *The Arms of His Love* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 2000): 375–6.