

LESSON 11

Protecting Ourselves against the False Doctrines of the Last Days

Introduction

In addition to teaching “the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (D&C 20:9), the Book of Mormon fortifies followers of Christ against the false teachings and ideas prevalent in the last days. One way it accomplishes this is by exposing the

enemies of Christ and identifying the false doctrines they spread. As students study accounts of false teachers in the Book of Mormon, they will learn to discern between the truths of the gospel and the false concepts of the world.

Background Reading

- Dallin H. Oaks, “Be Not Deceived,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 43–46.
- Dallin H. Oaks, “As He Thinketh in His Heart” (evening with Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Feb. 8, 2013), [lds.org/broadcasts](https://www.lds.org/broadcasts).
- Neil L. Andersen, “Spiritual Whirlwinds,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 18–21.

Suggestions for Teaching

2 Nephi 28:3–9, 12–15; Jacob 7:1–12; Alma 1:2–6; 30:12–18, 39–44; Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22

Identifying and protecting ourselves against false doctrines

Ask students to consider the diverse opinions that exist in the world about issues such as the following: God-given truth versus moral relativism (the idea that there is no universal right or wrong), religious liberty versus the rights of special interest groups, and the right to an abortion versus the right to life. As you discuss these issues, consider writing them on the board. Give students a few moments to discuss why we must be careful to embrace ideas that are correct.

Explain that near the end of His life, Jesus Christ prophesied of dangerous spiritual conditions that would exist in the last days. Invite a student to read Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22. You may want to point out that the phrase “the elect according to the covenant” refers to members of the Church of Jesus Christ.

- What threats do “false Christs” and “false prophets” pose in our day?

Display and read the following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994):



"The Book of Mormon exposes the enemies of Christ. It confounds false doctrines and lays down contention. (See 2 Ne. 3:12.) It fortifies the humble followers of Christ against the evil designs, strategies, and doctrines of the devil in our day. The type of apostates in the Book of Mormon are similar to the type we have today. God, with his infinite foreknowledge, so molded the Book of Mormon that we might see the error and know how to combat false educational, political, religious, and philosophical concepts of our time" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* [2014], 132).

- What does this statement teach about how studying the Book of Mormon can protect us from false teachings? (Make sure students identify this principle: **As we study the Book of Mormon and apply its teachings, we are fortified against the devil and the false teachings and concepts of our day.**)
- What advantage is there in learning about Satan's strategies before you actually encounter them?

Ask a few students to take turns reading 2 Nephi 28:3–9 aloud while the class looks for false ideas that Nephi said would be prevalent in our day. You might encourage students to mark important words and phrases. Invite students to share what they identified, and then ask:

- What are some modern-day examples of these false ideas? (Examples may include the following: moral relativism; belief that because of God's great love for us He will not punish sin; and prejudice against Christians, who are often seen as bigots or fanatics.)

To help answer this question, share the following statement by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Ask students to listen for false teachings they have encountered.



"False prophets and false teachers are those who declare that the Prophet Joseph Smith was a duplicitous deceiver; they challenge the First Vision as an authentic experience. They declare that the Book of Mormon and other canonical works are not ancient records of scripture. They also attempt to redefine the nature of the Godhead, and they deny that God has given and continues to give revelation today to His ordained and sustained prophets. ...

"Perhaps most damningly, they deny Christ's Resurrection and Atonement, arguing that no God can save us. They reject the need for a Savior. In short, these detractors attempt to reinterpret the doctrines of the Church to fit their own preconceived views, and in the process deny Christ and His messianic role.

"False prophets and false teachers are also those who attempt to change the God-given and scripturally based doctrines that protect the sanctity of marriage, the divine nature of the family, and the essential doctrine of personal morality. They advocate a redefinition of morality to justify fornication, adultery, and homosexual relationships" ("Beware of False Prophets and False Teachers," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 63–64).

Ask students to search 2 Nephi 28:12–15, looking for the consequences of believing in false teachings.

- What are some of the consequences of believing in false teachings and ideas?

Display the following statement by Elder Ulisses Soares of the Presidency of the Seventy, and ask a student to read it aloud:



“We cannot allow ourselves to be confused by popular messages that are easily accepted by the world and that contradict the doctrine and true principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many of these worldly messages represent nothing more than an attempt of our society to justify sin” (“Yes, We Can and Will Win!” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 75).

- What did Elder Soares say is the purpose of many of the popular messages that contradict the gospel of Jesus Christ? (Help students identify this truth: **Satan uses false teachings to entice us to commit sin.** You might refer to Alma 30:53 for more information about this truth.)

Divide the class into three groups. Write the following scripture passages on the board, and assign each group to study one of the passages: Jacob 7:1–7; Alma 1:2–6; or Alma 30:12–18. Ask students to identify some of the false teachings taught by Sherem, Nehor, and Korihor and to write them on the board under the appropriate headings.

<i>Sherem (Jacob 7:1–7)</i>	<i>Nehor (Alma 1:2–6)</i>	<i>Korihor (Alma 30:12–18)</i>
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- How have you seen false teachings or ideas such as those listed on the board affect Church members today?

Invite students to compare Jacob 7:5, 8–12 and Alma 30:39–44 to see what fortified Jacob and Alma against the false teachings of Sherem and Korihor. (*Note:* Comparing is a scripture study skill. Noting similarities “between teachings, people, or events can bring gospel truths into sharper focus” [*Gospel Teaching and Learning: A Handbook for Teachers and Leaders in Seminaries and Institutes of Religion* (2012), 22].)

- What fortified Jacob and Alma against false teachings? (Answers should include the following: previous spiritual experiences, knowledge of the scriptures, knowledge gained from the Holy Ghost, and a testimony of Christ.)
- What is a principle we might learn from the responses of Jacob and Alma to these false teachings? (Help students identify this principle: **When we rely on our testimonies of Christ and seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost, we can overcome challenges to our faith.**)
- How has your testimony strengthened you against false teachings or criticisms of your beliefs?

Encourage students to share what they are doing to protect themselves from the false teachings that can erode their faith in Jesus Christ and His restored gospel.

2 Nephi 26:29; 3 Nephi 18:24; 27:27

Recognizing the dangers of priestcrafts

Tell students that some spiritual dangers to the Church come from members within the Church. Ask a student to read 2 Nephi 26:29 aloud while the class looks for the spiritual danger described by Nephi.

- According to this passage, what are priestcrafts? (When people preach the gospel for personal fame or wealth rather than for the welfare of God's children.)
- In what ways could priestcrafts create spiritual dangers for members of the Church?

To help answer these questions, invite a student to read the following statement by Elder M. Russell Ballard:



"Let us beware of false prophets and false teachers, both men and women, who are self-appointed declarers of the doctrines of the Church and who seek to spread their false gospel and attract followers by sponsoring symposia, books, and journals whose contents challenge fundamental doctrines of the Church. Beware of those who speak and publish in opposition to God's true prophets and who actively proselyte others with reckless disregard for the eternal well-being of those whom they seduce" ("Beware of False Prophets and False Teachers," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 63).

- How can you protect yourself and others from priestcrafts?
- How can you defend the doctrines of the Church when others speak in opposition to God's latter-day prophets?

Tell students that the Savior taught His disciples how those who represent Him should teach and influence others. Ask students to silently search 3 Nephi 18:24 and 3 Nephi 27:27, looking for how true gospel service differs from priestcraft.

- How do the motives and actions of righteous teachers and leaders differ from the motives and actions of those guilty of priestcraft? (Students should identify the following truth: **Disciples of Jesus Christ seek to serve and bless others by pointing them to Him.**)

Moroni 7:12–17; Ether 4:11–12

Discerning truth and error

Ask students to think of a time when someone questioned or criticized their religious beliefs. Invite one or two students to briefly share their experiences.

Invite several students to take turns reading aloud from Moroni 7:12–17 and Ether 4:11–12 while the class follows along, looking for how to discern whether something is from the Lord or from the devil.

- What do you learn from this passage about how we can judge between good and evil? (Make sure students understand the following principle: **Everything that is of God invites us to do good, to believe in Jesus Christ, and to love and serve God.**)

Invite a student to read aloud the following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson:



"May I suggest three short tests to avoid being deceived. ...

"1. What do the standard works have to say about it? ...

"2. The second guide is: what do the latter-day Presidents of the Church have to say on the subject—particularly the living President? ...

"3. The third and final test is the Holy Ghost—the test of the Spirit. ... This test can only be fully effective if one's channels of communication with God are clean and virtuous and uncluttered with sin" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1963, 16–17).

To conclude, ask students to ponder how they can better use the scriptures, the words of the prophets, and the Holy Ghost to identify false teachings and avoid being deceived. You might encourage them to study Jacob 7, Alma 1, and Alma 30 in more detail and ponder how these chapters can help them better discern between truth and error.

Student Readings

- 2 Nephi 26:29; 28:3–9, 12–15; Jacob 7:1–12; Alma 1:2–6; 30:12–18, 39–44; 3 Nephi 18:24; 27:27; Ether 4:11–12; Moroni 7:12–17; Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22.
- Neil L. Andersen, "Spiritual Whirlwinds," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 18–21.