

ENGAGING GOSPEL DOCTRINE (EPISODE 191)

LESSON 18

“God Himself ... Shall Redeem His People”

Hook	You have to give Abinadi props... while facing his impending death, he gets into some serious advanced theology.
Manual Goal	To help class members appreciate the importance of the Atonement of <u>Jesus Christ</u> and stay true to their testimonies of the Atonement.
EGD Goal	To inspire class members to submit to their best selves, follow Christ’s example of condescension and empathy, and give and accept constructive criticism.

I. Sunday School

- a. Framing
- b. Two minute take home (I must like my lesson because even the two minute take home hits almost all the same points)
 - i. Submission and alignment
 - ii. Our empathetic God
 - iii. Constructive criticism (and constructive listening)
 - iv. legacies
- c. Reading commentary
- d. Lesson
 - i. Submission and alignment (flesh to spirit, child to parent)
 - ii. The power of an empathetic God (caring vs. empathetic)
 - iii. Humility, vulnerability, and criticism (both giving and receiving) “The story I am telling myself is”, “I” statements, clearly state what you are wanting and feeling (Instead of “you don’t care about me” or “how could you have done that” or “you are so blind”, you can say “My feelings are really hurt right now because... “ or “when you said that, I feel like you don’t value me” etc). Boundaries (behaviors we shouldn’t put up with)
 - iv. 10 Commandments: What would yours be? (Morals vs. ethics)
 - v. Legacies (the idea that “Abinadi only had one convert”)

II. Scripture Study

- a. History of the 10 commandments

III. Study Notes

- a. The soft dualism of Mormonism (flesh to spirit)
- b. The nature of God in Mormon theology (Read the beginning of Kirkland’s article)
- c. Critique of the 10 commandments

- d. What is the “self”? Are we always the same person? (We behave differently in different contexts, but goes even deeper: Internal Family Systems, turns out Inside Out is accurate!)

Link to Isaiah 53 discussion

<http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2014/03/inquiring-minds-jennifer-ouellette-science-of-self>

Talk about the different roles we have, how we are simultaneously baby and child and sibling and friend and partner and parent (talk just a little bit about IFS?)

Talk about motivation and fear/punishment based vs. reward based

“Elohim and Jehovah in Mormonism and the Bible” https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V19N01_79.pdf

Mormon Matters on Mormonism’s Jesus <http://mormonmatters.org/2016/05/04/330-mormonisms-jesus/>

Humanist 10 commandments. What would yours be? (tongue in cheek satanic commandments)
Talk about ethics! Morals vs. ethics.

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/friendlyatheist/2015/11/29/the-satanic-temples-seven-tenets-are-far-more-ethical-than-the-ten-commandments/>

Jimmy My Sunstone paper last summer was on this subject. I don't have a full write-up done, but I'd love to talk it over with you at some point, or get your opinion when I do have it written out. Bimodal rather than trimodal. There are arguments to be made for the Holy Ghost as a separate being and for the Holy Ghost as a manifestation of the Father/Son. There could also be an argument made that the Holy Ghost and the Spirit of God might not be the same thing. It's certainly clear that in the BoM, the Father only gains a body by being incarnated as the Son. Ammon even goes so far as to teach Lamoni that God is a Great Spirit. It leaves the door open for the argument that we had only two deities to begin with, the Father and Holy Ghost, who through the truth of reason, to paraphrase Sister Eliza R Snow, can be naturally surmised to be our Mother. Incarnation, then, becomes something that the Father only took on to be more like us, rather than the other way around. Embodiment is a state of fallenness that God bore in order to sanctify it and us. The Book of Mormon's theology is so much different from the Church's that I don't know how we got to the point that we did, though I believe I understand why.

In any case, I'm not sure modality is the perfect description for the BoM and D&C's assertions about God, but I believe that as Mormons we have taken the Council at Nicea and made it into a debate between the Trinity and our original, pure Godhead. And of course that's historical nonsense, and of course we don't describe Trinitarianism accurately: we create a straw man model of the Trinity which is actually more like Unitarianism than anything, but not exactly like that either. I feel that it's dismissive of the many different Christian theologies which exist, and elevates our Godhood to a position of opposition that it has not earned.

<http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/19/living/atheist-10-commandments/index.html>

1. Be open-minded and be willing to alter your beliefs with new evidence.
2. Strive to understand what is most likely to be true, not to believe what you wish to be true.
3. The scientific method is the most reliable way of understanding the natural world.
4. Every person has the right to control of their body.
5. God is not necessary to be a good person or to live a full and meaningful life.
6. Be mindful of the consequences of all your actions and recognize that you must take responsibility for them.
7. Treat others as you would want them to treat you, and can reasonably expect them to want to be treated. Think about their perspective.
8. We have the responsibility to consider others, including future generations.
9. There is no one right way to live.
10. Leave the world a better place than you found it.

I am critical of 3, 5, and 9. I think they could be framed more constructively in order to maximize the value of these precious 10 spots.

<http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2010/04/hitchens-201004>

So, then: how to prune and how to amend? Numbers One through Three can simply go, since they have nothing to do with morality and are no more than a long, rasping throat clearing by an admittedly touchy dictator. Mere fear of unseen authority is not a sound basis for ethics. The associated ban on sculpture and pictorial art should also be lifted. Number Four can possibly stay, though rest periods are not exactly an ethical imperative and are mandated by practicality as much as by heaven. At least, if shorn of its first and third and fourth redundant verses (none of which can possibly apply to non-Jews), Number Four does imply that there are rights as well as duties. For millions of people for thousands of years, the Sabbath was made a dreary burden of obligation and strict observance instead of a day of leisure or recreation. It also led to absurd hypocrisies that seem to treat God as a fool: He won't notice if we make the elevators stop on every floor so that no pious Jew needs to press a button. This is unwholesome and over-strenuous.

As for Number Five, by all means respect for the elders, but why is there nothing to forbid child abuse? (Insolence on the part of children is punishable by death, according to Leviticus 20:9, only a few verses before the stipulation of the death penalty for male homosexuals.) A cruel or rude child is a ghastly thing, but a cruel or brutal parent can do infinitely more harm. Yet even in a long and exhaustive list of prohibitions, parental sadism or neglect is never once condemned. Memo to Sinai: rectify this omission.

Number Six: Note that mere human systems have done better subsequently in distinguishing different moral scales of homicide. Memo to Sinai: Are you morally absolute or aren't you? If so, what about the poor massacred Midianites?

Number Seven: Fair enough if you must, but is polygamy adultery? Also, could not permanent monogamy have been made slightly more consonant with human nature? Why create people with lust in their hearts? Then again, what about rape? It seems to be very strongly recommended, along with genocide, slavery, and infanticide, in Numbers 31:1–18, and surely constitutes a rather extreme version of sex outside marriage.

Numbers Eight and Nine: Admirable. Also brief and to the point, with one rather useful nuance in the keyword “against.”

Number Ten: Does wrong to women by making them property and also necessitates continual celestial wiretapping of private thoughts. Sinister and despotic in that it cannot be obeyed and thus makes sinners even of quite thoughtful people...

Still, if we think of the evils that afflict humanity today and that are man-made and not inflicted by nature, we would be morally numb if we did not feel strongly about genocide, slavery, rape, child abuse, sexual repression, white-collar crime, the wanton destruction of the natural world, and people who yak on cell phones in restaurants. (Also, people who commit simultaneous suicide and murder while screaming “God is great”: is that taking the Lord’s name in vain or is it not?)

It’s difficult to take oneself with sufficient seriousness to begin any sentence with the words “Thou shalt not.” But who cannot summon the confidence to say: *Do not* condemn people on the basis of their ethnicity or color. *Do not* ever use people as private property. Despise those who use violence or the threat of it in sexual relations. Hide your face and weep if you dare to harm a child. *Do not* condemn people for their inborn *nature*—why would God create so many homosexuals only in order to torture and destroy them? Be aware that you too are an animal and dependent on the web of nature, and think and act accordingly. *Do not* imagine that you can escape judgment if you rob people with a false prospectus rather than with a knife. Turn off that cell phone—you have no idea how *unimportant* your call is to us. Denounce all jihadists and crusaders for what they are: psychopathic criminals with ugly delusions. Be willing to renounce any god or any religion if any holy commandments should contradict any of the above. In short: Do not swallow your moral code in tablet form.