

ELDER MELVIN J. BALLARD

While the President was speaking this morning he referred to the very important incidents connected with the celebration of the one-hundredth anniversary of the visit of the Angel Moroni to the Prophet Joseph Smith. While my soul was thrilled with the recital of that memorial service, I was asking myself the question:

What is the purpose in the bringing forth of the Book of Mormon? What was the primary object and purpose of the Lord in revealing the existence of those plates to the world in this generation? I recognize that there are many reasons why the Book of Mormon was and is needed. What a comfort it brings, what enlightening knowledge it gives to us concerning the ancient inhabitants of the American continent, and also how it magnifies the Lord Jesus Christ in his ministry among men upon this continent, as another witness for him and for the Lord's work.

TO BRING TO PASS THE REDEMPTION OF THE LAMANITES

But I thought of one of the revelations in the book of Doctrine and Covenants that gives more specific information upon this subject, and with your permission I shall read a few verses from the third section. The Lord said:

"Nevertheless, my work shall go forth, for inasmuch as the knowledge of a Savior has come unto the world, through the testimony of the Jews, even so shall the knowledge of the Savior come unto my people.

"And to the Nephites, and the Jacobites, and the Josephites, and the Zoramites, through the testimony of their fathers.

"And this testimony shall come to the knowledge of the Lamanites, and the Lemuelites, and the Ishmaelites, who dwindled in the unbelief because of the iniquity of their fathers, whom the Lord has suffered to destroy their brethren the Nephites, because of their iniquities and their abominations.

"And for this very purpose are these plates preserved, which contain these records—that the promises of the Lord might be fulfilled, which he made to his people;

"And that the Lamanites might come to the knowledge of their fathers, and that they might know he promises of he Lord, and that they may believe the gospel and rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ and be glorified through faith in his name, and that through their repentance they might be saved, Amen."

For this very purpose, therefore, were these plates preserved, to bring to pass the redemption of the children of father Lehi, known in North and South America, in Central America, and in Mexico, as the American Indians and some of the natives upon the isles of the sea. I feel, therefore, that as we celebrate the anniversary of this appearance and the first knowledge and information concerning this sacred volume of Scripture, it is a most fitting time for our attention to be called to the uncompleted task which yet rests upon the priesthood and the membership of this Church—to see to it that the Book of

Mormon accomplishes its full and complete mission in being an instrument in the hands of the Lord in bringing to pass the redemption of the Lamanites. Men have predicted the extermination of the Indians. They have foretold, as they thought, a time to come when the Indians would be no more. But the Lord has spoken upon that subject and said that the Lamanites shall flourish. No power can defeat the purposes of the Almighty. I have seen evidences in my own missionary work, having had the great privilege and pleasure of laboring a portion of the time at least, for ten years, among the Indians, which convinced me that the day of their redemption is coming. The Lord gave me to see and understand during that labor that he was performing many things in preparation for their redemption. He is giving them a language at the expense of the government of the United States, who in its generosity has spent millions of dollars in training and preparing the Indians in the English language, until the records show that in this country at least, nearly sixty per cent of all the Indians read or write the English language. The government has generously provided for them allotments of land that will be ample to sustain them and their posterity for generations to come, if only they will preserve these lands. I have seen the hand of the Lord at work in preparing the way for their redemption, and I wish to bear witness to you that their redemption shall come, and that the day of their redemption is near at hand, when these thousands, yea these millions of Lamanites on this Western Continent who have the blood of Lehi in their veins, or of his descendants, shall be touched by the power of the Almighty, and the day of their redemption, when it does come, will be one of power.

I desire that the Latter-day Saints, young men and young women, shall appreciate the Book of Mormon and read it and prepare their hearts and themselves so that when the time does come that they shall be called to go forth, that they shall be prepared to go and discharge the obligations which the Lord has placed upon us as the custodians of this record, to see to it that it does fulfil its mission. Its mission is not completed yet.

The Book of Mormon was given as a new witness to the world. The very best evidence, perhaps, that the Lord ever has given that Joseph Smith is a Prophet of God, is the Book of Mormon. Men may scoff at the idea of the Father and Son having visited him in the Sacred Grove; they may think that they can dispose of it to their own satisfaction at least, by calling it a fraud or a delusion, but the Book of Mormon is a real substantial thing. It is the miracle of "Mormonism." It cannot be disposed of in any such manner. It must be reckoned with, it must be accounted for, and all who diligently and earnestly seek to account for it shall come to acknowledge what Joseph Smith said is indeed the truth, that by the gift and power of God he translated the records from the plates that were placed in his hands, that record which is known among us as the Book of Mormon. It

stands, and it shall stand forever and ever, and it cannot be defeated nor can it be thrown down.

TO BLESS, BENEFIT AND SAVE THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD

I believe also that the Lord raised up the Book of Mormon and brought it forth, and in connection with it the mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith for a given and definite purpose, to be a benefit and salvation to the peoples of this world. I think that our Father in heaven is very much like an earthly father. He is more or less limited in his power to do things because of law that he observes and must observe. An earthly father cannot set aside the law of the land, nor can he veto the law of nature. If that father has a wicked and rebellious son who violates the law of the land or the law of God or the law of nature, that earthly father's great anxiety cannot save his son. All that earthly father can do is to warn his son of the danger, point out the difficulties that are before the boy, plead with him to change his course, and after he has made his appeal he can point out the way of safety, and then the father's powers to save are ended. All his over-weening love for that boy cannot go further. Our heavenly Father is very much in the same condition. You will discover, if you will read the first section of the book of Doctrine and Covenants, what the Lord said as he gave this wonderful address in the First Section to all the world through his servant the Prophet Joseph Smith. Reading from the seventeenth verse we find the following:

"Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments;

"And also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world; and all this that it might be fulfilled, which was written by the prophets—"

Let me now read from the twenty-second verse:

"That mine everlasting covenant might be established,

"That the fulness of the gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers.

"Behold, I am God and have spoken it; these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding."

I understand from this that the Lord plainly knew the condition of the world, what it was in 1830, and what it would be today in the year 1923. Knowing the calamities that were coming to his children, unless they changed their course, knowing their disposition that there would be no repentance in their hearts, and yet with a great desire to save them, he called upon his servant, Joseph Smith, to warn men, to call repentance, and others to join in this great proclamation to all men: "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." And not only to warn men that there was peril and danger ahead, but to offer the means of escape from the perils that would come. Our merciful Father never has left his children in a condition of dire peril from which

they could not extricate themselves, either in the days of Noah, in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, or in the days of the Redeemer himself, or in these latter-days,—it is all the same. He has always in ample time given his sons and daughters full and complete warning of the perils and dangers that are ahead of them, and has, in that connection, clearly pointed out the way of escape. That has been true in this dispensation, and the warning has been proclaimed on the islands of the sea, in the continents of the world, and through the states of the United States, and among even Pagan nations, the warning voice of the servants of the Lord has been heard, for nearly one hundred years, and it is a warning voice that also comes with a kind invitation to all the Father's children, showing the means of escape, which is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, restored again among men. I stand here without any fear and say without any danger of anybody successfully being able to prove the contrary, that if the warning voice of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the elders of this Church had been heeded by the nations of the earth, we would not have seen the dreadful calamity of war through which we have passed, that these problems could have been solved and averted. The means was provided, and the means was rejected, and then when our Father has done this, though he be God, is yet limited to law, by obedience to which he became God, and he must honor the same, he cannot step beyond those limitations and set aside the law. The law must take its course, and when men refuse the offer and tender the Lord has given by which they may be saved, they cannot blame the Lord if calamities, judgments and destructions come upon them. The Lord cannot avert it, it must take its course, and yet our Father in his kindness and mercy has offered the way and the means of escape.

GOD'S VOICE CRYING REPENTANCE THROUGH THE ELEMENTS

Now I want to bear witness of something else: You will find it recorded in one of the revelations to the Prophet Joseph Smith and the elders of this Church, that after the testimony of the elders should come the testimony of lightnings, of thunder, of earthquakes, of the sea heaving itself beyond its bounds, and of destruction, the elements being engaged in bearing testimony—the thunder would cry repentance. And yet in that same revelation the Lord said they would not heed that warning voice no more than they had heeded the warning voice of his servants. But I want to call the attention of the Latter-day Saints, and indeed if I had the power, the attention of all the world to the fact that God is speaking through the elements. The earthquakes, the sea heaving itself beyond its bounds, bringing such dire destruction as we have seen are the voice of God crying repentance to this generation, a generation that only in part has heeded the warning voice of the servants of the Lord. Oh, that men would hear the voice of the elements proclaiming repentance, and if they shall not hear it they shall be visited with dire calamity, for this is the

day of settlement, the day of reckoning, the hour of God's judgment has come. I rejoice not in the prospects of the chastisement that awaits the nations of the earth. I desire that they would save themselves. The means is yet at hand. By repentance and by turning to the Lord Jesus Christ they may find that salvation, but without it there is no salvation for this world.

SIGNS OF THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

When Jesus spoke to his disciples in answer to their query: "Show us when the end of the world shall come, and the time of thy coming," he told of certain signs that would indicate the time of his coming, the very signs that the world, if they only had eyes to see, could be beholding today: Said he: judge the matter even as you would judge the coming of spring. When you see the fig tree putting forth its leaf, ye know that summer is near, and so when you see these signs, you may know that the coming of the Son of man is nigh at hand. I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ was just geologist enough to know the time when this earth would quake, when the processes of nature should go forth to cause great upheavals, and knew the hour, just as an astronomer can predict the time of eclipse. The Lord Jesus knew when that would happen, and he knew it was coincident and immediately preceding the wonderful events that would happen in preparation of his coming.

YOU SHALL SEE WONDERFUL THINGS COME TO PASS IN THIS GENERATION

These are the last days spoken of by the prophets of old. These are the signs. Oh, Latter-day Saints, let us, though we be in Zion, be not asleep, for this is the day when no man can be at peace, nor shall we remain at peace in sin or in transgression; for everything will be shaken that is not built upon righteousness, and every man, whether in Zion or elsewhere, who does not keep the commandments of God, shall be shaken and shall fall, and shall feel the chastening hand of the Almighty. Oh, let us be good, obedient children, that we may learn in time, the lessons the Lord wants us to learn, and if we shall do it, if we shall keep the advice and counsel of the President of this Church, in the address given this morning, the judgments shall pass over us as they did in the days of ancient Israel, and those who keep the commandments of God have no need to fear, and they will discover that the Lord has seen this from the beginning, and he has known where to plant this people, and this people shall here be preserved if only they shall serve the Lord. They need not fear anything else, only to serve God and keep his commandments, and you shall see wonderful things come to pass, even in this generation.

THIS IS AN INDIVIDUAL TESTING TIME

May the Lord teach us to be obedient, to be humble, to be peaceable, and to be faithful, to stand in this testing time, for

this is a testing time, when individuals are being tested—no great assault against the Church, but a mighty assault on the part of the evil one against every individual. This is an individual testing time, and the enemy is at work, and he is in the midst of this people, seeking to capture souls that he may have them on his side in the coming conflict, for there is a coming conflict, and the powers of the evil one on the earth, and in hell shall be arrayed in deadly conflict for the victory of rulership and power and dominion over this earth against the Son of God. And the hosts of the righteous, living and dead, shall be victorious, and the evil one and all his power shall be overcome. But there is coming the time of strife, and there will be no peace from this day until that conflict is ended, by the victory that shall come to the Lamb of God and his faithful Saints. And may the Lord shorten those days for the elect's sake, and preserve us on the side of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his faithful sons and daughters, I pray in his holy name. Amen.

ELDER RICHARD R. LYMAN

I have enjoyed the tremendous inspiration of our heavenly Father that has been poured out upon us during this conference. Nearly every speaker thus far has referred to the visit of Moroni. When the 21st day of September came, very naturally, like the rest of you, I thought of this visit. I read from the Pearl of Great Price that wonderfully concise and convincing story of the life of the boy Joseph Smith.

MORONI'S MESSAGE.

As Brother John A. Widtsoe has already said, the Angel Moroni repeated his message three times, once, twice, thrice in a single night, and by that time daylight appeared. Again the following day, September 22, the boy Joseph Smith, but seventeen years of age, found his way, guided by the vision of the night before, to the Hill Cumorah and there discovered the plates. The message was repeated for the fourth time. In this message many passages of scripture were referred to and quoted. I read these references. While but a part of the third chapter of Malachi was quoted, I read it all.

THE LAW OF TITHING.

The part of this chapter which refers to the law of tithing I read with very great interest. It says:

"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Malachi, 3:8, 10.)