

Should we not more and more read the holy scriptures and know them? How shall we know the truth about them? There is but one way. It is the way that was given us by the ancient prophet, Moroni. He wrote, some fifteen hundred years ago, these words:

Now I, Moroni, write somewhat as seemeth me good; and I write unto my brethren, the Lamanites; and I would that they should know that more than four hundred and twenty years have passed away since the sign was given of the coming of Christ.

And I seal up these records, after I have spoken a few words by way of exhortation unto you.

Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Jesus, the Savior, gave us this same truth, and every prophet has given us the same admonition from then until the present hour: "Seek ye the kingdom of God and the word of God, and ye shall know."

This is our message to the world. Knowledge of God can come in no other way but by prayer and revelation. May we go forth, illuminated as we will be by this great conference, and become a light unto the world, and remember in our hearts always that it is our Father in heaven who is directing his holy work, through the priesthood of God which he has established in the world.

That we may be blessed to this end, I ask, in the name of Jesus, Amen.

ELDER DAVID A. SMITH

First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

I am happy this afternoon, my brethren and sisters, in having this privilege of meeting with you. I have rejoiced in this conference from the very first moment. I find here the spirit of peace and of love, the spirit which comes always when men and women are engaged in the work of our Father, our God.

As I sat here yesterday and listened to the music, and thought of the work of the Summit Stake choir that sang for us yesterday, I saw them gathering in little groups in different parts of their stake, driving four, six, eight or ten miles, one night each week, to a meeting place, to prepare themselves to be of service to their fellows in their own stake. A week ago tonight they drove from their homes to this building, where they practiced for two hours.

I see in that not only the music, which is helpful to all, but also a service in which they too have found joy and happiness. Yesterday, as I looked over this group, and felt the spirit that was present, I looked in imagination beyond this building out into the world, and I saw war and bloodshed and strife and turmoil, selfishness and greed.

Then I looked back a few centuries and I saw the Pilgrim Fathers coming to this land. I saw them tilling the virgin soil and making homes. Finally I saw them as the bands of oppression were again tightening upon them, and I saw them taking up arms to defend their liberty and their rights, for which they had suffered untold hardships. I saw them at Lexington and at Concord, poorly equipped, but with courage, facing the trained army of their parent nation. I saw them expend their ammunition and retreat before superior forces, but determined and hoping and praying.

It is said by military experts that had the British at that time followed through with the course they had commenced the great revolution would have been at an end and the United States would not have existed. But instead they took to their ships, leaving several hundred cannon, ammunition and supplies sufficient partly to equip the then small army which they had been fighting.

The colonials continued on with that great struggle, which lasted for more than three years, without a single chance of winning—enough to discourage anyone—until finally victory came on that historic night when Washington crossed the Delaware river with his troops, starting in three columns, two of which failed to arrive. There was no battle. One man was taken prisoner, two men killed, and two men frozen to death.

In reviewing all of this—I am going over it hurriedly, because time will not permit me to go into detail—I refer to a report made by a military reviewing officer who said, "One is almost compelled to believe they were protected through divine providence."

And later, when we were engaged in the Civil War, the Northern forces outnumbered the South, but did not have the spirit and determination found in the South. They were beaten in every battle for three years, and there were times when the Northern forces were almost completely surrounded, but each time something happened that caused the Southerners to withdraw and the Northern forces were permitted to reorganize. Finally, when the South had exhausted its man power and its resources, it was compelled to surrender, and the history was written. The military reviewer said: "We are almost compelled to agree with those who believe that this great government was established through divine providence." It seems to me that one cannot be a Latter-day Saint unless he believes that this government was established through divine providence.

I want to read from the Book of Mormon, and I refer to Ether, second chapter, 9th and 10th verses :

And now we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise; and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fulness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fulness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity;

For behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God.

And again, in Ether the 13th chapter, beginning with the first verse :

And now I, Moroni, proceed to finish my record concerning the destruction of the people of whom I have been writing.

For behold, they rejected all the words of Ether; for he truly told them of all things, from the beginning of man; and that after the waters had receded from off the face of this land, it became a choice land above all other lands, a chosen land of the Lord; wherefore the Lord would have that all men should serve him who dwell upon the face thereof;

And that it was the place of the New Jerusalem, which should come down out of heaven, and the holy sanctuary of the Lord.

Behold, Ether saw the days of Christ, and he spake concerning a New Jerusalem upon this land.

And he spake also concerning the house of Israel, and the Jerusalem from whence Lehi should come—after it should be destroyed it should be built up again, a holy city unto the Lord; wherefore, it could not be a New Jerusalem for it had been in a time of old; but it should be built up again, and become a holy city of the Lord; and it should be built unto the house of Israel;

And that a New Jerusalem should be built up upon this land, unto the remnant of the seed of Joseph, for which things there has been a type.

For as Joseph brought his father down into the land of Egypt, even so he died there; wherefore, the Lord brought a remnant of the seed of Joseph out of the land of Jerusalem, that he might be merciful unto the seed of Joseph that they should perish not, even as he was merciful unto the father of Joseph that he should perish not;

Wherefore, the remnant of the house of Joseph shall be built upon this land; and it shall be a land of their inheritance; and they shall build up a holy city unto the Lord, like unto the Jerusalem of old.

And Nephi, recorded in I Nephi, 2nd chapter, beginning with the 19th verse :

And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Blessed art thou, Nephi, because of thy faith, for thou hast sought me diligently, with lowliness of heart.

And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands.

And I Nephi, 17th chapter, beginning with the 33rd verse: the land of promise, who were driven out by our fathers, do ye suppose

And now, do ye suppose that the children of this land, who were in that they were righteous? Behold I say unto you, Nay.

Do ye suppose that our fathers would have been more choice than they if they had been righteous? I say unto you, Nay.

Behold, the Lord esteemeth all flesh in one; he that is righteous is favored of God. But behold, this people had rejected every word of God, and they were ripe in iniquity; and the fulness of the wrath of God was upon them; and the Lord did curse the land against them, and bless it unto our fathers; yea, he did curse it against them unto their destruction, and he did bless it unto our fathers, unto their obtaining power over it.

Behold, the Lord hath created the earth that it should be inhabited; and he hath created his children, that they should possess it.

And he raiseth up a righteous nation, and destroyeth the nations of the wicked.

And he leadeth away the righteous into precious lands, and the wicked he destroyeth, and curseth the land unto them for their sakes.

We have gone through great tribulations during the last few years—depression, we call it. Brother Ballard called upon us to get away from the dole, to get away from relief. It seems to me that some of us are in the condition the people were in at the time the prophet of the Lord said: "Will a man rob God?" and he was speaking of tithing. There are those who rob God, for they fail to pay their tithing. Brother LeGrand Richards has given us one little reminder of what the Lord will do for those who approach him in faith.

Have we ever stopped to wonder whether or not we have robbed God of our time? He requires that we give of our time in the service of his cause, in laboring with our fellow men, those who have troubles, those who are weak, those who need encouraging; and he says: "Let those who are strong encourage those who are weak, that my church may be built up," and it is our responsibility.

We rob him of his holy day. It is a holiday with many. How many times have you called your solemn assemblies on the Sabbath day, only to have them disturbed by ball players in an adjoining lot? I have observed that a few times this year, while attending conferences.

It seems to me that this can become a choice land—a land choice above all other lands—only through the righteousness of God's people, for he has so said, and there is no other interpretation that we can place upon it. Therefore, if depressions come upon us, if we are caused to suffer because of a lack of rain or moisture, if our ground fails to produce in the season thereof sufficient for our needs and requirements, may it not be because we go about our work unconcerned for those who are careless and neglectful?

I attended a conference recently where the president apologized for changing the program. He informed me that the people came from great distances. Instead of holding a meeting on Saturday night they held it at one o'clock, in order to provide daylight time that all might participate in a ball game on Saturday afternoon, and he pointed out to me in the congregation that afternoon the players who would play after meeting. After our meeting had been brought to a close all adjourned to the adjoining ball park where we witnessed the ball game, leaving the Sabbath day free for services and the work of the Lord.

It seems to me this is not a difficult thing to do. I have no desire to deprive any young man or boy of the privilege of playing ball or engaging in any other athletic sport. I think they need to do so. But it seems to me it is about time that we elders of Israel, at least where we have control and have the right to say what shall be done, should put a stop to the desecration of that day which God has said "shall be holy."

I refer to these matters briefly, as a reminder to us that while blessings have been promised they are contingent upon our faithfulness to the work entrusted to our care. The Lord has said:

I give unto you directions how you may act before me, that it may turn to you for your salvation.

I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise. (D. & C. 82:9, 10.)

Oh, if we could take the spirit of this conference home and sit down with these boys and men, pray with them and urge them to see what they are doing to their fellow men, and how much more they might enjoy life and the blessings of God should they turn their minds and their thoughts and their attention to him and his work!

This is our mission at home. Brother LeGrand Richards said: "It is a great privilege to sit with these young men as they begin to study the scriptures, and see how marvelously the truth of the Gospel as it has been committed to us by the prophets and restored in these latter days unfolds, and how their minds are able to grasp the truth." And that is true, too, but is it not an indictment against us to have it said that young men go to the mission field to study the scriptures and to gain a testimony? Brethren, if we were living in harmony with the Gospel principles, if we were teaching our young men by example and precept, they would go out into the mission field under the influence of the Spirit of God and with a testimony, and it would no longer be said they go to the mission field to gain a testimony.

I pray that the day will soon come when we will take upon us fully this responsibility, and see to it that every young man who goes out in the world to preach the Gospel knows the meaning of the Gospel principles, and is living them every day of his life.

God help us to understand and engage in this work in the spirit which he is willing to give to us, and without which we cannot accomplish his purposes, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

PRESIDENT HEBER J. GRANT

I have decided, as there is not sufficient time left for another speaker at this meeting, to read the report of changes in Church officers since last April Conference.