

Saturday, October 10

Book of Mormon record is as a voice from the dust, messages from the dead, warnings from the Lord:

"Return unto me and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts." (3 Nephi 24:7.)

Our Lord cries, "Wo unto him that spurneth at the doings of the Lord; yea, wo unto him that shall deny the Christ and his works!" (*Ibid.*, 29:5.)

You have been preserved to this epochal day, and the gospel is available to you now. Wash your souls in the blood of the Lamb. Cleanse your lives, study the scriptures, accept the gospel and ordinances.

These predictions can be fulfilled and

come to you through one channel only, the path of righteousness and faith; else all these promises are but empty, unfulfilled dreams.

May God bless you that you may accept the truths now revealed to you, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

He to whom you have just listened is Elder Spencer W. Kimball of the Council of the Twelve. Our next speaker will be Elder Eldred G. Smith, Patriarch to the Church. He will be followed by Bishop Joseph L. Wirthlin.

ELDER ELDRED G. SMITH

Patriarch to the Church

My brothers and sisters, I pray that the Spirit of the Lord will be with me to give me utterance of the thoughts that I have in mind to give in this conference. It is a privilege, that I enjoy very much, to meet with many of the new converts of the Church, for many who come to me to receive blessings are the results of our missionary work, and I want to express praise and commendation to the missionary work in the Church because I see the results of it. They are good, and I think it is probably the cream of the crop that come to me.

I enjoy very much hearing their stories of how they have become members of the Church, the processes they have gone through in overcoming difficulties and in receiving a testimony of the divinity of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many tell miraculous experiences—experiences of miraculous healing, experiences of divine guidance, experiences of assistance to accomplish what otherwise would be impossible—and the Lord has said to us that "signs shall follow them that believe."

I would like to emphasize the word *follow* just a little bit. He did not say they would precede and be a guide and a testimony to us to prove in advance that this is the gospel of Jesus Christ. He said that the signs shall "follow" those that believe, and I find this to be the case in the stories that I hear.

The Lord has also warned us, saying, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." (Matthew 24:24.)

Also, in referring to the day of the judgment, he said, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?"

"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (*Ibid.*, 7:22-23.)

Those who have told these experiences, even miraculous experiences, testify to me that it is not the experiences alone that give them a testimony of the divinity of the gospel. True, they strengthen their testimony; true, they are experiences that make them think, cause them to investigate the Church, but they alone are not the things that give them a testimony of the gospel.

For instance, just recently a woman told me of her experience. She became very ill. It had been determined that she had cancer. She had gone through surgery on numerous occasions, until she had come to a point where the doctors had given her up and told her that she did not have months to live, but only weeks. There was no hope for her. She was living at home with a nurse to take care of her. A neighbor

called one day. She had a phone near her bed so she could answer it, and the neighbor said to her, "Now when the doorbell rings, don't answer it. It is just those Mormon missionaries coming down the street; so when the doorbell rings, just don't answer it. Don't pay any attention to it."

So the woman thanked her for her consideration, her kindness. She told her nurse that when the doorbell rang she was not to answer it; it was just those Mormon missionaries and to pay no attention to them. Well, the doorbell rang after a few minutes, and the nurse, from force of habit, opened the door, then realized that she had been told not to. She quickly disposed of the missionaries. Immediately after, the nurse left the house to get some groceries. There came a knock on the door. For some reason or other the missionaries had returned. They knocked and got no answer, so they opened the door and called in. Hearing a response from an inner room they went on in. The woman said the missionaries came and stood beside her bed and mumbled a little between themselves something she did not understand. Then one of them said, "Well, it's highly irregular, but I guess if you say so it is all right." The next thing she knew she had been administered to by these Mormon missionaries.

She said when they took their hands off her head she sat up in bed. She got out of bed and went into the kitchen and got some food from her refrigerator. Then she excused herself while she dressed. The missionaries made an appointment to come back at another time. When the nurse returned and saw the woman was up and around, she told her to get back into bed. "No, I'm not going back to bed. I am healed. I am well," the woman said.

The nurse, thinking she was delirious, called the doctor. The doctor also ordered her to get back into bed, but she refused again and said she was well. Over a year later, after the doctor had told her she had but weeks to live, she came to Salt Lake City and went to the temple, then came to my office for a blessing. She was very happy, thrilled as she had never been before in her life. The happiest part of her life has been since the doctor told her she couldn't

live. Yet she said it was not the experience of healing alone that gave her a testimony of the gospel.

There are other experiences such as Brother Bates from England told me. He had been working in the MIA, or youth work, in Manchester, England. A large group of circulars had to be sent out in the mail in order to have a youth conference at a scheduled time. He and his group worked feverishly together to get these circulars in the mail. It seemed an almost impossible task, but somehow or other they accomplished it. In order to do so, however, he had spent all morning at it. He had previously made a business appointment for one o'clock at a distance which he knew he could not drive in the time he had left. He had often driven there before, and the time he had left was but a small fraction of what he knew it would take to cover that distance. But he said, "I will take care of the Lord's work first, and then I will leave it up to the Lord as to how my business works out."

He got into his sports car and drove that distance as fast as he could in safety, as he had done many times before. His appointment was for one o'clock, I think he said. When he drove through the gates of the establishment, the clock in the tower struck one. He could not believe it. He said it was impossible. There was something wrong. He got out of his car, and the man he was to meet was waiting for him. He said, "That's what I like about you—your punctuality. Right on the stroke of the time you are supposed to be here, you are here. That is what I like about you." In the course of proceedings the man gave him an order worth 10,000 pounds, without Brother Bates even asking for it, or without his even selling the man on his goods. He said, "That is what the Lord did because I did my Church work first. But these experiences alone are not what is giving me a testimony of the divinity of the gospel."

I could go on with many similar experiences. We hear them in our testimony meetings all the time. An instructor in a Sunday School class was talking about the Book of Mormon. All the members of the class had testified that they had a testimony of the divinity of the Book of Mormon. They were discussing the three witnesses, and

the eight witnesses—discussing why there were these witnesses. Some said that the reason for them was to give others a testimony of the divinity of the Book of Mormon. Then the teacher asked the class, "How many here have a testimony of the divinity of the Book of Mormon because of the three witnesses?" There was not one who raised a hand. He said, "What is it, then, that gives you a testimony of the divinity of the Book of Mormon or the divinity of the gospel of Jesus Christ? It is something down inside, isn't it? There's something inside of us that testifies to us of the truth of the gospel."

Many might explain away these miraculous experiences. They might say that the woman would have been healed anyway. They might say that Brother Bates got his time mixed up or some other way of explaining the distance he had traveled, which to him was impossible. But you ask the individual who had the experience—it doesn't make any difference what the other people say, he knows down inside that there is something else there that no one can take from him. That is the knowledge, I think, that Brother Bruce McConkie was talking about this morning when he said that we have to have knowledge to obtain a testimony of the gospel. It is that knowledge that comes to us from down inside.

We are made up of a spirit and a physical body. That spirit body lived in the pre-existence, and that spirit that is down inside of us and gives us light is what prompts us to a knowledge of truth. When we are in tune with the Spirit of the Lord, that spirit within us gives us that knowledge that no one else can take from us. When we keep the commandments of the Lord, and one of the primary purposes of being on this earth is to learn obedience by our experience and to seek the gospel so that we can have as a reward through our free agency for having lived the law of the gospel, the many blessings which the gospel plan gives us, that spirit within us prompts us and gives us that knowledge.

By that method, the Lord has said: ". . . seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." (Matt. 7:7.) It does not come by just sitting by

and waiting and expecting it to come to us; we have to reach for it. And after we have reached for it, after we have fulfilled the law by which we may receive these blessings, then, through faith, these signs follow. And these signs that follow testify to us again that this is God's work; that he is directing his Church here upon the earth.

Many may ask, "How do we get these testimonies?" They come to us through experience, yes, by our own efforts. I would like to refer to the well-used passage in the Book of Mormon, the admonition of Moroni to obtain a testimony of the divinity of the gospel of Jesus Christ:

"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.

"And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things." (Moroni 10:4-5.)

We have here the promise that truth and knowledge in all things shall be given unto us if we shall seek in faith, and if we shall put ourselves in tune with the Holy Spirit, that Spirit will speak to us and give us those experiences that will give us knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I testify to you that I know this is the gospel of Jesus Christ; that I know that God lives and Jesus is the Christ; and that this gospel which has been restored to us through the Prophet Joseph Smith by revelation is the plan of life and salvation, and the way by which we may receive all the blessings of exaltation which have been promised down through the ages, and I testify to you to this end in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Elder Eldred G. Smith, Patriarch to the Church, has just spoken to us. We shall now hear from Bishop Joseph L. Wirthlin, Presiding Bishop of the Church. He will be followed by Elder ElRay L. Christiansen.