

preparation for this great work. Is there anything greater that people can do than to offer others the opportunity of membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and thereby give them the privilege of earning an exaltation in the kingdom of God? I think that is the greatest blessing that anybody can ever offer to people.

Now, the seventies have that as a special calling and a special responsibility. Just how well we acquit ourselves of it, I cannot say. I can say this, however, that as a member of the First Council, I am tremendously proud of the lives that most of our seventies live, and of their willingness to sacrifice for this great and worthy purpose.

But the great thing that has come out, or one of the great things that has come out, of the interviews that we have had with the mission presidents over the last few days, is the fact that some of these young people have not been so taught and they have to learn it under the direction of the mission presidents. It becomes a grave responsibility for a mission president to have to implant into the soul and heart of a young man the testimony that should have been placed there by his father by his own faith and prayer and service to the Church.

Now, if we could just realize this, brethren and sisters, if we could realize when these tots are growing up, that care in the way we live, care in the things we do, care in the things we teach them, can so build into their consciousness a testimony of the truth, that

at maturity they will have been able to go through all of the trials of adolescence and come out unscathed. That is the objective, brethren and sisters, of this great work—one of them.

And as fathers of this growing generation, and as mothers, we have that responsibility, brethren and sisters, to prepare these young people for that service, because that is one of the three major purposes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and I am not here to tell you which is most important—the work for the living members of the Church, the work for our dead ancestors, or the effort to give this great opportunity to people who have not yet understood it. They are three major purposes of the Church, but it does not matter which one of those fields you aim at, the problem is to implant into the hearts of those youngsters whom you have brought into this world, a testimony that will make their lives as near perfect as possible, and their service to their fellows a tremendous and wonderful one.

May God bless and help us, I pray, doing it in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

He to whom we have just listened is Elder Antoine R. Ivins, member of the First Council of Seventy. Elder ElRay L. Christiansen will now address us. He is an Assistant to the Twelve.

## ELDER ELRAY L. CHRISTIANSEN

*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

I have been deeply moved by the timely and appropriate messages of those who have spoken in this conference, beginning last evening, and also by the beautiful and inspiring music that has been rendered both last night and today.

Now I desire to discuss briefly with you, a matter which should be the concern of every member of the Church and for which I believe there is a need, on the part of many of us, for greater interest and fervor.

We live in the period of time spoken

of by the prophets of the Bible, when all the keys of the priesthood, the powers, the gifts, and the authority are restored and are now in the hands of the servants of the Lord in this day, all of which is preparatory to the ushering in of the millennial reign of the Savior.

The primary purposes of this dispensation are first, to gather Israel through the great missionary service of the Church and the proselyting effort of all of us, that through the gospel of Jesus Christ, they may seek and find salvation and exaltation with their families.

And secondly, the redemption and salvation of the dead through vicarious service.

Section two of the Doctrine and Covenants contains the words spoken by Moroni, the angel who appeared to Joseph Smith, the Prophet. While it is very brief, it is, nevertheless, one of the most significant and important of all revelations. Elder John A. Widtsoe one time had this to say about this section:

"The beginning and the end of the gospel is written in section two of the Doctrine and Covenants. It is the keystone of the wonderful gospel arch; and if that center stone should weaken and fall out, the whole gospel structure would topple down in unorganized doctrinal blocks."

Let us see what is contained in this momentous revelation:

"Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

"And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers.

"If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming." (D&C 2.)

Thus in this revelation, Moroni reiterated the promise of the Lord made through Malachi, centuries before. (Mal. 3:5-6.)

About twelve and a half years after these pronouncements were given by Moroni, Elijah actually appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and committed into their hands the keys of the sealing power and said unto them, ". . . by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors." (D&C 110:16.)

Along with the restoration of the keys and the powers of the priesthood to enable the living and the dead to gain salvation, there came an almost overwhelming responsibility and obligation to the Latter-day Saints, to act as agents of the Lord in bringing about the program of salvation and redemption to their fellow men. Where in all the world can you find a people whose faith teaches them to recognize the justice and mercy of God in granting to *all* men, living or dead, the same or at least

an equal opportunity to receive salvation? Since God is just, his divine plan of salvation includes the means and the power by which those who have died without a knowledge of the gospel may hear it, and if they will, receive it, and thereby gain the gift of eternal life.

In a public discourse, President Wilford Woodruff once made this significant and consistent statement:

"Since God is no respecter of persons, he will not give privileges to one generation and withhold them from another. The whole human family, from Father Adam down to our day, have got to have the same privileges somewhere, of hearing the Gospel of Christ. They have to be preached to in the spirit world. But nobody will baptize them there. Therefore, someone must administer to them by proxy here in the flesh, that they may be judged according to man in the flesh and have part in the first resurrection."

And a few years later, this great leader said:

"We have to enter these temples and redeem our dead. This is the great work of the last dispensation, the redemption of the living and of the dead."

Now the redemption of the dead carries a twofold obligation and mission, to which we have all been called by revelation of the Lord. In the journal of President Woodruff he wrote this:

"I, Wilford Woodruff, received the following revelation from the Lord." Included in that revelation which was unanimously adopted by the Presidency and the Twelve of the Church and by the Church in conference assembled, is found this admonition:

"We want the Latter-day Saints from this time to trace their genealogies as far as they can and be sealed to their fathers and to their mothers and have their children sealed to their parents and run this chain through as far as you can get it. This is the will of the Lord to the people."

Brothers and sisters, there can be no substitute for the Lord's plan in redeeming our dead relatives, and no amount of side-stepping our individual responsibility will excuse us for neglecting to do these two important things, namely, identifying the dead from the records available, and then seeing to it that they have received in the temples

by proxy the necessary ordinances for their salvation.

We as heads of families must not equivocate in this; we must not procrastinate; we must not assume that Aunt Martha or some other relative is doing all that needs to be done in this respect.

Members of the Church are coming to the temples in ever-increasing numbers. For some time the average number of endowments administered on behalf of the dead by the good people in this temple district, has averaged 1738 endowments a day, besides the sealings and the baptisms. Nearly 40,000 were administered during the month of March in the twenty-three days during which the temple was open. The same thing is going on in all the temples. I see in this service one of the greatest tributes to the faithfulness of the Saints on behalf of others that could be manifested by anyone, anywhere. When I see busy men nearly equaling the number of women, coming hurriedly from their offices and from their work, regularly by appointment to act in behalf of these who have passed beyond, it touches my heart. The fervor of those who come is marvelous, and the love that they manifest for the dead is beautiful to behold. It is indeed the second great commandment in action.

The other phase of our responsibility, however, that of identifying the dead through genealogical research, is barely keeping pace with the work done in the temples of the Lord. In this temple we have for some time administered many more endowments for the dead than we have baptisms for the dead. That means that we will eventually run into difficulties if something is not done in the matter of more extensive research on the part of the individual families.

Some time ago the First Presidency authorized the sending forth of a letter appealing to leaders throughout the Church to strengthen the genealogical committees in the stakes, in the wards, and in the missions and to encourage those assigned to this work to go into the homes of the people and teach the fundamental procedures necessary to accomplish this work of genealogical research. In that letter, priesthood quorum presidencies are urged to actuate this work through their committees,

through their quorum Church service and quorum activity committees, particularly, and to see to it that each family in their quorum is attending to this indispensable part of the Lord's program and this essential part of their own welfare and salvation. For I tell you, none of us can expect to bathe in glory if we have "gone it alone" and have not reached out a hand for others in this respect.

In this letter, young people are urged to obtain training now offered in the various auxiliary organizations through the courses presented there, and then to cooperate with their parents in identifying their loved ones who have departed from this life.

The sisters are encouraged to co-operate with their husbands and to the best of their ability and skills to act as researchers.

But the responsibility lies directly in the hands of the bearers of the priesthood, the heads of families to motivate, organize, and carry this work on through to a completion. As new temples are built, there is even a greater and greater need for research to provide the necessary names for the proper operation of our temples. Almost everyone can make a beginning by writing his own name, with his own genealogical information, and then continuing on with his parents, and his grandparents, and so forth. All who will do this will find it a fascinating adventure and a most compensating work.

Let us heed the call of our beloved leaders! The First Presidency of the Church, and the other Brethren are cognizant of this need and are anxious about it and are extremely temple-minded, themselves. Let us heed their call and through our efforts and research demonstrate that we have turned our hearts to our fathers, that the purposes of the Lord may be fulfilled. For this I pray humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord. Amen.

**President David O. McKay:**

Elder ElRay L. Christensen, Assistant to the Twelve, has just spoken to us. "Oh Say, What Is Truth?" will now be sung by the Choir and congregation. Brother Jay E. Welch, Assistant Con-