

President David O. McKay:

Elder LeGrand Richards of the Coun-

cil of the Twelve will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder A. Theodore Tuttle.

## ELDER LEGRAND RICHARDS

### *Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

I am very grateful to my Heavenly Father, brothers and sisters, for the privilege of attending this conference with you, for your faith and devotion, for the service you render, and for my association with my brethren of the General Authorities.

In my heart I welcome the three new ones that have come to us this day.

I feel grateful for my membership in this Church, more than for anything else in all this world, and I do not know how I could live without it.

In President McKay's opening remarks and in two of the prayers that have been offered at the commencement of these meetings, reference has been made to the privilege of being here in this historic building. As we come here from time to time in our various meetings and gatherings, we hear that expression, and I would like to make a few comments on what makes this building so historic. It is wonderful as we think of the great men, prophets of this dispensation, who have occupied this pulpit, and of the counsel and the advice they have given and the testimonies that have been borne and the experiences related of the hand-dealings of the Lord with his people and his guidance and direction through the years. Then we recall the wonderful music and prayers we have heard from time to time, as we have come here, all of which has made an impression upon our lives, until we have left this building with new hope and new ambition and new desires.

I was reading a pamphlet a few days ago that was given to my father by his mother before I was born, and in that pamphlet it reported a special conference held in the Old Tabernacle on the 28th of August, 1852, for the purpose of calling missionaries. We have heard a lot about missionaries and missionary work at this conference, but that is one of our great responsibilities.

In that meeting there were some 3,000 elders of Israel present and the full Presidency of the Church, President Brigham Young, President Heber C. Kimball, and President Willard Richards, seven of the twelve, and most of the General Authorities.

President Kimball was asked to speak to the brethren present, the elders of Israel, about the purpose of the meeting, and he told them that they were there, many of them, to be called into the mission field, and ninety-eight of them were called and assigned to the following places: The British Isles, France, Germany, Capital of Prussia (Berlin), Norway, Denmark, Gibraltar, Hindoostan, Siam, China, Cape of Good Hope (South Africa), Nova Scotia and British Provinces in America, West Indies, British Guiana, Australia, Sandwich Islands, and parts of the United States.

Mind you, that was only five years after the Saints had gathered here from their drivings in the East and before there were any railroads, and yet they were sent out to these distant lands.

We heard yesterday from Bishop Wirthlin some of the sacrifices that these early brethren made in order that this great missionary cause would continue to roll forth. My grandfather and the grandfather of Brother Franklin D. Richards, whom you sustained here today, out of the first fourteen years of his married life, spent ten years of it in the mission field away from his family. That was typical of what many of the brethren did.

I thought you would be interested to hear a statement or two by President Kimball to those elders upon the occasion mentioned. He declared:

"I say to those of you who are elected to go on missions, go, if you never return, and commit what you have into the hands of God—your wives, your children, your brethren, and your property."

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Nearly all of these men were married, and they had only been here a short time to establish their families. Elder George A. Smith, the following speaker, said:

"The missions we will call for during this conference, are generally not to be very long ones, probably from three to seven years will be as long as any man will be absent from his family."

And then he continued:

"If any of the elders refuse to go, they may expect that their wives will not live with them, for there is not a Mormon sister who would live with a man a day, who would refuse to go on a mission."

That is quite a statement, and while it seems to us today a little extreme, nevertheless, when you travel through this Church and see the sacrifices that are being made—Brother Isaacson referred to them this afternoon—to sustain these somewhat 8,000 missionaries in the field, it is a wonderful thing.

I would like to relate two experiences I have had in interviewing missionaries. A few years back, I interviewed a young man in southern Utah before we had discontinued sending young married men into the mission field, and when I looked at his recommend papers I saw that he was a married man, and I said: "Does your wife want you to go on this mission?" He said she did, and I said, "Why didn't you bring her?" He said, "I couldn't. She just gave birth to our first child this morning in the hospital." Then I said, "Well, then we will have to go to the hospital." And we did, and there was that young mother with her firstborn child in her arms. I said, "Do you want this husband of yours to go on a mission?" She said, "Brother Richards, I surely do. When we married we decided that our marriage should not stand in the way of his mission, and my parents are able and willing to care for me and the baby." And so he went on his mission and was a wonderful missionary. I kept in touch with that little woman while he was gone.

I had a similar experience in Provo. I interviewed a young man under the same circumstances, except that his wife was just expecting a call to go to the hospital any moment, to give birth to their first child. Later as I visited in

Idaho in one of the stakes, I stayed in the home of the stake president, and there was this little mother, taking care of her baby while that missionary-husband was in the mission field.

The Lord has put into this Church the breath of life. He has made it possible for people to make the supreme sacrifice, almost, in order that this work will go forward in all the earth. You remember when one came to him and said, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," and the answer was, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." (Luke 9:57-58.) And so, of course, the man turned away. Unto another he said, "Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." And as if the Master would speak to all coming generations of the importance of this great missionary cause, he said: "Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." (*Ibid.*, 59-60.) Now that spirit has prevailed and carried on this great missionary cause of the Church.

I remember being in this Tabernacle as a boy when President Woodruff gave what I think was his last address to the people, when he told how marvelously the Spirit of the Lord had guided him all through his ministry. I remember the story he told about traveling east on one of his missionary journeys, and in the middle of the night he was warned by the Spirit to arise and move his wagon and team. They were fastened by a large oak that had stood possibly a hundred years and had never been disturbed, and after he had moved the wagon and the team, a whirlwind came and took that oak tree up by the roots and threw it right where his wagon had been stationed.

Such testimonies are what have made this a historic building. One could hardly say that he did not know that the power of God was in this work, and that his Spirit operates and guides and directs. Such things could not be, except the power of God is with this people.

In that same address, I remember his telling of bringing a group of immigrants from England, I think it was, and when they were about to embark on a boat at New Orleans, and he was

making arrangements with the captain, that same Spirit told him not to go, either himself or his company, and so he excused himself, and they did not go on that boat. And it had only gone up the river a short distance when it caught fire and burned, and everybody on it was killed. He said, "If I had not listened to the Spirit of the Lord, we would not have bishop so-and-so and president so-and-so," naming them right from this very pulpit. This is a historic building. The power of God has been and is here.

I would like to refer to another experience related by President Woodruff as he stood here and talked in the conference in 1898, and this is recorded in the *Conference Report*. He said: "I am going to bear my testimony to this assembly if I never do it again in my life that those men who laid the foundation of this American government, and signed the Declaration of Independence, were the best spirits the God of heaven could find on the face of the earth. They were choice spirits, not wicked men. General Washington and all the men that labored for the purpose were inspired of the Lord.

"Another thing I am going to say here, because I have a right to say it: Everyone of those men that signed the Declaration of Independence with General Washington called upon me as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ in the temple at St. George, two consecutive nights, and demanded at my hands that I should go forth and attend to the ordinances of the House of God for them." And he and others did that work for them.

Such an experience would seem almost incredible to the world. The things of God are understood, Paul says, by the Spirit of God, and the things of man are understood by the spirit of man, and the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him. (1 Cor. 2:14.) If God could take Elijah to heaven without tasting death, if he could promise to send him again, as Malachi declared, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children lest he come and smite the earth with a curse (Mal. 4:5-6), surely he could permit such characters as George Washington and the signers of the Declaration of Independence to come

back to ask for their blessings, because they were sent upon this earth before Elijah came, before holy temples had been built, before men could receive the holy ordinances of the house of the Lord for their exaltation.

I bear my testimony in closing that there is not a man and a woman in this world—in or out of the Church—if God would only give them the vision to see and the heart to understand that would not do everything within their power to obtain such blessings as these men sought at the hands of this apostle of this dispensation who later became the President of this great Church. This is in keeping with the promise of the building of the house of the God of Jacob in the latter-days in the top of the mountains, and the gathering thereunto from all the nations of the earth to learn of his ways and walk in his paths. How rich we are in the blessings of God, and how great have been the things that have come out of this historic building.

God grant that we may so live that in all our ministry we may be prompted and guided and inspired by that same Spirit, I humbly pray, and leave you my blessing, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### President David O. McKay:

We shall hear from Brother Tuttle perhaps tomorrow.

We want to thank these young men and young women for their presence today. Brother Shand, thank you, the singing by your group has been glorious and selections appropriate. We are glad that these young people participated in this wonderful service this afternoon and this morning. And the members of the Bonneville Strings have the thanks and gratitude of a vast audience—only part of whom you have seen in the Tabernacle. We thank you and those of the University whom you represented so nobly and well this morning and this afternoon.

The University Choral Groups, accompanied by the Bonneville Strings, will sing, "Praise to the Holiest," with the soloists, Beryl Jensen Smiley, mezzo-soprano, and Ronald L. Christensen, tenor. The group will be conducted by