

Joseph Smith right here on the American continent in the year 1820, which to me is one of the most important and thrilling happenings since the resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ, and one with which all members of the Church are very familiar, and which is being told by the missionaries throughout the world.

It is the story of a young boy, not yet fifteen years of age, who desired to know which of all the churches was true. He knew that God could not be the author of all the confusion where each church was zealously trying to establish its own tenets and disprove others. In order to get the answer direct, he went alone to ask God in prayer. As he knelt in the grove by himself, he saw a pillar of light exactly over his head, which was above the brightness of the sun, and he saw two Personages whose brightness and glory defied all description, standing above him in the air.

One of them said to Joseph, "This is my Beloved Son. Hear Him!" As soon as Joseph could speak he asked which church he should join, and he was told to "join none of them, for . . . they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof." (Joseph Smith 2:17, 19.)

As he left this grove, though he had been taught that God was just a spirit, he knew as he knew that he lived that God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ

were personal beings, and he bore testimony that they had appeared to him and had instructed him. Though only an obscure boy, not yet fifteen years of age, he was ridiculed and persecuted by ministers and men of high standing, who told him that there were no such things as visions or revelations in these days; that all these things had ceased with the apostles, and that there would never be any more of them.

However, though only a boy, he maintained that he had beheld a vision, and all the persecution under heaven could not make it otherwise. It was through him that the gospel was restored, and the Church and kingdom of God, known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was established in which we have apostles and prophets and the priesthood of God with our beloved Prophet David O. McKay at the head of Christ's Church here upon the earth.

This is my witness to you this day, and I do hope and pray that we will all go forth, keeping all of the commandments of God, bearing this testimony to the world, as our missionaries are doing so effectively, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Elder Nathan Eldon Tanner, Associate to the Twelve, has just addressed us. Our next speaker will be Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve.

ELDER EZRA TAFT BENSON

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Someone has said there is a new Beatitude which reads: "Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall not be disappointed."

I stand before you this morning in deep humility and gratitude, my brothers and sisters, rejoicing in the opportunities and blessings which have been mine to be in attendance at this conference. With all my heart I endorse the counsel that has been given and add my witness to those testimonies already borne.

I think it was Edgar A. Guest who said:

"Some folks leave home for money
And some leave home for fame,
Some seek skies always sunny,
And some depart in shame.
I care not what the reason
Men travel east or west,
Or what the time or season—
The home-town is the best."

I am so happy, my brethren and sisters, to be with you today back here in

the bosom of the Church, and to realize that I can probably remain here beyond the end of this conference session this afternoon.

As I drove west a few days ago from my home of eight years in Washington to these valleys of the mountains, I caught myself singing many of the old familiar Mormon hymns: "O Ye Mountains High," "Beautiful Zion for Me." I had a great joy in my heart, and I had a great surge of freedom, I think augmented somewhat by the fact that I was behind the wheel of my own car after riding behind government chauffeurs for eight years.

It is good to be home. There is one expression that has become very dear to me. It has been repeated over and over again, I guess, hundreds of times by many people during the last few days: "Brother Benson, it is good to have you home again." It isn't half as good to have me home as it is for me to be home. It is a joy, my brethren and sisters, to be here to enjoy the warm welcome and the sweet spirit of brotherhood and fellowship that we have in the Church. I know it is very real. Of course, it isn't what it should be. It isn't what it could be. It isn't what it will be, as we continue to increase our faith and live more fully the gospel of Jesus Christ. But it is truly a sweet spirit.

I am grateful for the privilege of being back again associating with my brethren of the General Authorities. There is no sweeter association in all this world among men than the association we enjoy as a body of General Authorities of the Church. And I say this after having traveled six million miles in forty-two nations during the last eight years. And I am grateful to be a part of this brotherhood, this fellowship, this spirit, which is part of the Church and kingdom of God.

I express my gratitude this morning for the interest that has been shown in my activities during recent years, for the support that has been given to my humble efforts. These have been eight rather difficult, eventful, and I must say, rewarding years. I have had a prayer in my heart constantly that I would never do anything that would

hurt the Church, or my great country—your country.

I have missed the association of the brethren of the General Authorities. I think the happiest hour each week has been on Sunday when I had the pleasure of reading the minutes of the weekly meeting of the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve, held in the upper room of the Salt Lake Temple. I am grateful to President McKay for kindly granting me this privilege.

I have missed the weekly travels to the stakes and missions of the Church, and yet I have had the glorious privilege of meeting the Saints in many parts of the world. I have had a conviction, through all this period, my brethren and sisters, that I was where the Lord wanted me to be. I hope and pray that I will always be where he wants me to be. I have had no doubt of that since President McKay in November 1952, realizing that there might be a request for me to occupy an important government position, said to me: "Brother Benson, my mind is clear, and if the opportunity comes in the proper spirit, I think you should accept."

The opportunity came in the proper spirit on a high spiritual plane, and I accepted. We have a responsibility as American citizens to respond to the calls of Presidents of the United States. As a humble stake president I had responded to such a call from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and served for some time on a four-man national agricultural advisory committee during the 1940's.

But the thing I am most grateful for this morning is the faith and prayers that have been exercised in my behalf during the last eight years—first of all by my brethren of the General Authorities, by the members of my own quorum, by the First Presidency and others, by my devoted family, and my companion who always has come to the rescue especially during crucial periods—and we have had a few. I shall ever be grateful for the faith and prayers of the Latter-day Saints throughout the Church and for the faith and prayers of the people of all faiths from all over the free world. Hundreds, yes, thousands of letters, telegrams, telephone calls, and

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other messages have given ample evidence of the great amount of faith and prayer that has been exercised in my behalf. Without this faith and without this help I am sure I could not possibly have accomplished even the small amount that I have been able to do.

Yes, it has been a politically sensitive position. There have been honest differences. Thank God we live in a land where men and women can differ honestly without fear. I have been in countries where that is not possible. I know that some of the differences have probably been inspired by political expediency, but on the whole I think they have been honest differences.

There has been criticism too, but I am frank and honest in saying that it has never bothered me very much, because in my heart I have been convinced I was doing the thing that seemed to me, at least, to be right, and the thing which our mail and other evidence also indicated represented the views of the overwhelming majority of the American people. And I have nothing in my heart, nor have I had, except a love for the people. I have had no bitterness. I have no bitterness today. At times when the wonderful representatives of the press, who have been such a help, have said, "Surely, you must hate these people who criticize you," I have usually replied, "I do not hate any living soul. I love all of our Father's children. True, I love some more than others."

But honestly, my brethren and sisters, I have had no feeling of bitterness or hatred in my heart, for which I am deeply grateful because I have prayed—we have prayed as a family—that we could avoid any spirit of hatred or bitterness. I love our Father's children. I think the great rank and file of them are good. Oh, they have weaknesses—all of us do—but as I have visited them in forty-two nations, I found that they are very much the same. True, some of them have bad leaders. Some of them have lost that which is priceless, yea, even more priceless than life itself—their freedom, their right to choose, their right to make their own decisions. But on the whole they are good people.

I like to think they have five things in common—five aspirations, five hopes.

I have found that universally they long for peace, and I am confident that if the leaders of this world or of the nations of the earth respond to the will of the people, they will work and labor and pray for peace.

Secondly, they want to live as brothers, as neighbors, and friends. Third, they love their homes and families, and on the whole they want to be good parents. Fourth, they want to raise their standards of living. They want to enjoy some of the comforts of life, some of the opportunities for development and growth and culture. And fifth, they desire to do good.

Now, most of these people have been from the rural areas, but keep in mind that the rural people of this world represent more than half of the total population. They are people who have had their feet in the soil, who have been close to the land, who live and work in the country, and they are solid, substantial people, not easily stampeded, who probably know about as well as any other segment of our population that "as ye sow, so shall ye reap."

I am grateful for the people I have worked with. I am grateful that my lot has been cast in large measure with the rural people of the world. I am grateful for the support I have had from many of these wonderful people, from the wonderful group of men who have been associated with me in the Department of Agriculture, for their spirit of loyalty and unity and devoted service. I am very grateful for the support I have had from the Chief Executive during these eight years, for his loyalty, for his deep spirituality, for his determination to do that which he believed to be right, and to approve my doing so as well. Also I am grateful that he remained true to his promise that I would never be asked to support any program or policy which I did not believe in, and I am sure he knew in his own heart that I would not do it anyway.

I say I love our Father's children. Hundreds and thousands of them I have contacted during the last eight years. Last night in the priesthood meeting we heard about the great "share the gospel" program and the referral program. I have the names of some 9,000

men, approximately, with whom I have had personal contact in an official capacity. I hope to give referral cards for them. I would like to have every one of them hear the gospel. I wish that all of our Father's children might enjoy the blessings that come through an acceptance and living of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Yes, even when I was in Russia, I expressed the hope to the Russian leaders, our hosts, that after my tour of duty was over for the government that I might have the opportunity of returning to Russia and being privileged to hold meetings to discuss my philosophy of life and to talk about things spiritual with the wonderful Russian people. Of course, I was not given a promise. The leaders of communism are afraid of the light of truth. But it is my hope and prayer, my brethren and sisters, that some time in some way the door may be opened in all the nations of the earth, that they might receive the message of the restored gospel; that they might enjoy the blessings of freedom under a system similar to what we enjoy here in this great land—a system that has brought us so much joy and happiness and so many of the good things of life—a system based on freedom of choice, on the private ownership of property, on the right to exchange our goods and services with our neighbors.

Yes, I love this great land. It has been an honor to serve. I know that this nation has a prophetic history. I would to God that every citizen of this land might read the Book of Mormon prayerfully and learn something of the prophecies made regarding this land—the promises made and the conditions upon which they are made—that we might as an American people so live that these great promises could be fully realized; that we might come to know that the Constitution of this land has been established by men whom the God of heaven raised up unto that very purpose.

This nation has a great mission to perform. Here was prepared the place where the gospel could be restored as has been told so beautifully by Brother Tanner. It is my conviction that the world needs, as it needs no other thing,

the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the people of the world want what the gospel will give, but they do not realize it. They want the anchor which the gospel provides, which gives them the answers to the problems that face them; that brings them a feeling of security and a feeling of inner peace. The gospel is the only answer to the problems of the world, my brethren and sisters. We may cry peace. We may hold peace conferences. And I have nothing but commendation for those who work for peace. But it is my conviction that peace must come from within. It cannot be imposed by state mandate. It can come only by following the teachings and the example of the Prince of Peace.

Yes, I am happy to be back home. It is my hope and prayer that I may be able to help in some small way to carry this glorious message to our Father's children. I have hoped and prayed that my services in the last eight years may have contributed somewhat to the great missionary effort of the Church. I wish that we might go to all the world—to Israel, where I have had the opportunity of two extensive visits recently, where miracles are being performed, where prophecies are being fulfilled. I wish we could go to the wonderful Arab countries. I shall never forget how I was received with open arms, how the hand of friendship and fellowship was extended to me there.

I shall never forget my visit to Egypt, and as a tangible evidence further of their love and friendship, they offered to me one of their choicest prized gifts—a wonderful Arabian stallion. I would like to see us carry the gospel to India, to the humble people of that land; to Pakistan, to China, to Yugoslavia, to Poland, to Russia, everywhere, because, my brethren and sisters, our message is a world message. This Church is a world organization.

A hundred and thirty years ago, when the elders were assembled in conference to determine whether the revelations should be published to the world, the Lord saw fit to give a revelation to his Church, which was also directed to the world. He referred to it as his "Pref-

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ace," or his "Introduction to his Book of Commandments," and it is the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants, from which I quote these words: (Note them carefully.)

"Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high, and whose eyes are upon all men; yea, verily I say: Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together.

"For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; . . .

"And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days.

"And they shall go forth and none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them." (D&C 1:1-2, 4-5.)

So our message is a world message. It is intended for all of our Father's children. When God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ saw fit to come here to earth and appear to a boy prophet, surely such a visitation was intended to bless all of our Father's children.

I testify to you today, my brethren and sisters, that the gospel is true; that it has been restored to the earth in its purity, in its fulness. Mormonism is the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fulness, and therefore Mormonism is true. God help us to live the gospel. I testify to you that God has again spoken from the heavens. The heavens are not sealed. The vision of God the Father and the Son to the boy prophet did in very deed occur. God lives. Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer of the world, not just a great moral teacher, as much of the Christian world is claiming, but the Savior of mankind, the very Son of God.

Joseph Smith was a prophet of the Living God, one of the greatest prophets that has ever lived upon the earth. He was the instrument in God's hand in ushering in a great gospel dispensation, the greatest ever, and the last of all in preparation for the second coming of the Master.

I bear witness that these things are true, and that we have standing at the head of the Church today a prophet of the Living God, who holds all the keys

and authority necessary to carry forward our Father's program for the blessing of his children. As God lives, I know these things to be true and bear this witness to you, my brethren and sisters, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve has just concluded speaking.

Brothers and sisters, in bringing to a conclusion this very impressive session of the One Hundred Thirty-First Annual Conference of the Church, we take this opportunity to express sincere appreciation to the owners and managers of the many television and radio stations that have offered their facilities to us. We are grateful for this great public service. Forty cities in the Intermountain West and the Pacific Coast are carrying the proceedings of this Conference. According to a survey, as was stated in the opening session, it is estimated that well over a million people are listening in this morning.

We are grateful for the attendance of all who are present in the Tabernacle, in the Assembly Hall, Barratt Hall, and in other gatherings where this Conference is seen and heard. We desire to acknowledge the presence this morning of prominent persons. We have had assistance in trying to see that we do not miss any. You will all be pleased to hear that we are honored this morning with the presence of Sir Thomas and Lady Bennett of London. Sir Thomas is a true servant of the people, a well wisher for the Church, and one who has rendered masterful, helpful service in building our temple and chapels in Great Britain and other places. I esteem him as a great friend, and value his friendship highly.

Also present are Wallace F. Bennett, United States Senator; Frank E. Moss, United States Senator; United States Congressman, David S. King; Governor George Dewey Clyde; Secretary of State, Lamont Toronto; Associate Judge of the Federal Court, A. Sherman Christenson. From educational institutions: Ernest L. Wilkinson, president of the Brigham