

SECOND DAY

AFTERNOON MEETING

Conference reconvened Saturday afternoon, September 30 at 2:00 p.m.

President David O. McKay, who presided and conducted the services, announced that the choral music for this session of the Conference would be furnished by the University of Utah Institute of Religion, University Stake Chorus and the Bonneville Strings, David A. Shand Director.

President David O. McKay:

The following telegram was just received: "The missionaries and members of the East Central States Mission send greetings and love to you for a successful Conference. President and Mrs. Frank H. Brown."

We wish to welcome Mr. James E. Webb, Director of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Washington, D. C., who is attending this Conference as the guest of Congressman David S. King. He is in Utah inspecting missile plants in northern Utah.

You will be pleased that we are favored this afternoon by the singers of the University of Utah Institute of Religion, University Stake Chorus, and the Bonneville Strings, under the direction of Professor David Austin Shand, with Alexander Schreiner at the organ.

We shall begin these services by the

Combined Choral Groups singing, "The Lord's Prayer." The invocation will be offered by Elder H. Loren Allen, president of the Mesa Stake.

Singing by the Chorus, "The Lord's Prayer."

Elder H. Loren Allen, president of the Mesa Stake, offered the invocation.

President David O. McKay:

The University of Utah Institute of Religion, University Stake Chorus, and the Bonneville Strings will now favor us with, "Prayer Is The Soul's Sincere Desire." David Austin Shand is conducting, Brother Alexander Schreiner is at the organ. After the singing we shall hear from Elder William J. Critchlow, Jr.

Singing by the Chorus, with Bonneville Strings and organ accompaniment, (Alexander Schreiner at the organ) "Prayer Is The Soul's Sincere Desire."

President David O. McKay:

Our first speaker this afternoon is Elder William J. Critchlow, Jr., Assistant to the Twelve. He will be followed by Elder Marion G. Romney of the Council of the Twelve.

ELDER WILLIAM J. CRITCHLOW, JR.

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Forty-two hundred years ago or thereabout, there arrived upon this American continent a company of people under the leadership of one Jared and his brother. They came out of the valley of Mesopotamia where the Tower of Babel was under construction. Our Lord initiated and prospered them in their migration, and upon arrival, he "swore unto the brother of Jared, that whoso should possess this land of promise, from that time henceforth and for-

ever, should serve him, the true and only God, or they should be swept off when the fulness of his wrath should come upon them." (Ether 2:8.)

Sixteen hundred years later, our Lord initiated and prospered another migration of people to this continent. They fled from Jerusalem to escape a Babylonian conquest. Upon arrival the Lord counseled them through his Prophet Lehi, their leader, as follows:

"... Inasmuch as ye shall keep my

commandments ye shall prosper in the land; but inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence." (2 Nephi 1:20.)

Four hundred years later, these people of Lehi discovered a colony of people who had also fled from Jerusalem to escape the Babylonians, about 600 BC. Mulek, son of the Jewish King Zedekiah, was a royal member of this fleeing party. The people of Lehi and the newly discovered people of Mulek united and dwelt together, and to them the Lord repeated his promise and warning. His prophet, King Benjamin, uttered it from a tower:

"... he [our Lord] has promised you that if ye would keep his commandments ye should prosper in the land; and he never doth vary from that which he hath said; therefore, if ye keep his commandments he doth bless and prosper you." (Mosiah 2:22.)

These promises and warnings to the people of Jared, Lehi, and Mulek were directed to and for the benefit of the people who lived in the days of those prophets who gave them utterance; in other words, they were for local consumption. They were also engraved on metal plates, which the prophets preserved for the benefit of rising generations. When our Lord's prophet, Mormon, abridged those records about 324 AD, the great Jaredite nation, once numerous, prosperous, and cultured, had become extinct. They failed to heed the warning and were "swept off when the fulness of his wrath" came upon them (Ether 2:9); they had "ripened in iniquity." The great Nephite nation, at one time the more righteous of Lehi's descendants, had also "ripened in iniquity" and had similarly become extinct. Our Lord again had kept his promise: "They shall be swept off when the fulness of his wrath shall come upon them." (*Idem.*)

In the destruction of these unrighteous people, our Lord preserved the records containing his promises and warnings. He had them hid up, then 1,400 years later he had them brought forth to warn the inhabitants of this land that they also must keep his commandments, lest they be "swept off when the fulness of his wrath . . . come upon them." Obviously, Mormon's abridgment

was written to us. The title page of the abridgment, known as the Book of Mormon, says it was "Written to . . . the . . . Gentile—Written by way of commandment . . . Written and sealed up, and hid up unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed—To come forth . . . in due time by way of the Gentile." Incidentally, may I add, the title page is a part of the abridgment and not the composition of Joseph Smith. (*DHC* 1:71.)

The great Prophet Moroni, son of Mormon, hid up the records, but before doing so he added a terse warning all his own—and he specifically directed it to those into whose hands the records would subsequently come. He called them Gentiles.

"And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God—that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fulness come, that ye may not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done." (Ether 2:11.)

Who are the gentiles of whom this prophet spoke? President Joseph Fielding Smith said: ". . . We are of the Gentiles! By this I mean that the Latter-day Saints have come to their blessings through the Gentile nations. President Brigham Young . . . said that Joseph Smith was a pure Ephraimite. This is true, yet Joseph came also of Gentile lineage. So do most all members of the Church." (*The Way to Perfection*, p. 140.)

The prophecies which I have quoted—"written to the Lamanites . . . and also to Jew and Gentile"—are repeated in greater or lesser detail thirty-eight times in the Book of Mormon. Count them as you read it. One student did and came up with that total, thirty-eight. Surely, they constitute one of the great messages of that book.

Three times within the past year or so, I visited in stakes where I found the memberships fasting and praying for moisture. And three times before I left those stakes I saw their prayers answered. I must tell you about one of those visits.

I found the members fasting with special prayers—Saturday noon until Sunday noon—for much needed storms.

Saturday, September 30

Second Day

Arising Sunday morning, after our Saturday prayers, we were cheered by a beautiful light covering of snow. It continued to snow throughout the morning. When we recessed for lunch, the lawns around the meeting place were brilliant; several inches of heavy wet snow blanketed them. Departing in the late afternoon, I said to the stake president: "Our prayers are answered." "Yes," he replied, "but Elder Critchlow, we need so much more!"

"How much more do you deserve?" I asked. My reply puzzled him—his silence invited me to explain:

"At noon," I began, "when we recessed the conference, nearly all of the congregation departed for their homes, where I suppose they broke their fast. Many failed to return to the afternoon session—because of the storm. Well, it may have been because I was the afternoon speaker. Nevertheless, they should have returned. I'm sure the storm didn't dampen their spirits—it must have lifted them—their prayers were answered."

The stake president was disappointed with the attendance. I think Heavenly Father was, too, and I think he cut his blessing short—at least the storm clouds rolled on and away and a bright, hot afternoon sun quickly erased most of the evidence of his blessing. Maybe he gave them all they deserved. "Only fifteen percent of your stake membership returned to the afternoon meeting," I said, "and I have noted in your reports that:

"—only.....% of your members are on the tithing records.

"—only.....% of your members attend Sacrament meetings.

"—only.....% of your men attend priesthood meetings.

"—only.....% of your boys attend their meetings.

"—only.....% of your girls attend their meetings.

"—only.....% of your sisters attend Relief Society meetings.

"—only.....% of your boys and girls are married in the temple.

"—only.....% of your members receive ward teaching visits.

So much for blanks and percentages. These are enough. For obvious reasons I left the percentages blank; no need to herald our failings to the world; no need

to herald one stake's failings to another; each has its own. Let each insert its own percentages, they will differ only in degree. The failings are a common fault.

Brigham Young had something to say about percentages:

"... while six-tenths or three-fourths of this people will keep the commandments of God, the curse and judgments of the Almighty will never come upon them, though we will have the trials of various kinds, and the elements to contend with." (JD 10:335-6.)

We live in a wicked world like unto Babylon of old. Our latter-day prophets, like the prophets of old, have cried, "Come out, come out of Babylon." To come out physically presents a problem, but spiritually it is possible, and spiritually we must come out if we are to prosper in the land.

We come out spiritually when we pay honestly our tithes and offerings. We come out spiritually when we attend to our priesthood duties and attend our priesthood, Sacrament, and stake conference meetings. These the members of the Church have been commanded to attend.

Once in the dim, distant past, our Father's children turned from him. Has it been so long that we have forgotten how, at that time, he cleansed the earth of wickedness with a flood? Has it been so long that we have forgotten the warning: "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man"? (Luke 17:26.) Have we forgotten how God spared a city of righteous people, Enoch's people by translating them before the flood?

In the great holocaust to come, the earth will again be cleansed of wickedness as it was in the days of Noah, and God may spare again a righteous people, "if six-tenths or three-fourths of this people will keep the commandments of God."

What are the commandments God would have us keep? Three serve the subject of my theme. He has instructed us:

1. to attend stake conference.
2. to attend Sacrament meetings.
3. the priesthood bearers to attend their priesthood meetings.

In the process of abridging the Nephite records, the great Prophet Mormon

paused to meditate on our Lord's ministry of nearly 1,000 years over the early inhabitants of this continent, and he expressed his reflections in an "editorial" which he inserted in his abridgment. He wrote:

"And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see that the Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him.

"Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art; sparing their lives, and delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; softening the hearts of their enemies that they should not declare wars against them; yea, and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One—yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity.

"And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit

them with death and with terror, and with famine and with all manner of pestilence, they will not remember him." (Helaman 12:1-3.)

God loves us. He doesn't always love the things we do.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: . . ." (Rev. 3:19.)

"Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you whom I love, and whom I love I also chasten that their sins may be forgiven, for with chastisement I prepare a way for their deliverance in all things. . . ." (D&C 95:1.)

Perhaps, the elements may be a little kindlier next year if we remember him.

Perhaps we'll be a little more deserving next year if we remember him. I so hope. I so pray. I leave you my testimony: God lives and loves us. He answers prayers, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

He who has just spoken is Elder William J. Critchlow, Jr., Assistant to the Twelve. Our next speaker will be Elder Marion G. Romney of the Council of the Twelve. He will be followed by Elder Thorpe B. Isaacson.

ELDER MARION G. ROMNEY

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My brothers and sisters, I welcome wholeheartedly into the councils of the Church the brethren who have been called to service this day. With equal feeling, I express my appreciation for the services of those who are retiring.

I would like to say a further word or two to Brother Buehner and Bishop Wirthlin. I first came to know Brother Buehner in the early days of the welfare program. He was then president of Granite Stake. He rose immediately to meet the challenges of that program. While some others were dragging their feet, he did a tremendous work in it, and he has been carrying on ever since. He knows how we love him.

More than thirty-five years ago, Bish-

op Wirthlin and I served together in a seventies quorum. We loved him then. We loved him later when he became bishop of the ward in which we lived. Our love increased when he became president of Bonneville Stake. I apologize for the bad time I gave him while I was a bishop, and he was president of the stake. We loved him when he came into the Presiding Bishopric, and we still do. Joseph, we love you now more than we ever did. The Lord loves you. May his peace be with you.

While President McKay was talking yesterday, these lines, written by William Cowper, came to mind. In them I have substituted "faithful" for "fearful":