

### The mission of the Church

Our mission as a Church is to teach the unbelievers and the uninformed the message of faith as it pertains to the gospel and the divine callings of Jesus Christ and Joseph Smith.

There is no other way, and the Church feels keenly its responsibility in this respect.

As a boy I remember attending church in a modest meetinghouse built by the early settlers of Cache Valley. My memory of that old chapel is very dim, but I recall the design painted on the wall behind the stand. On it were three messages.

In bold lettering on the top were the words: "Holiness to the Lord." It suggested worship. Below this expression of faith was another one which read: "Truth will prevail." Still further down and near the bottom were the words: "Truth crushed to earth will rise again." To me as a boy it meant one thing, the restored gospel of Christ. Truth was synonymous with Mormonism so called, and a revealed truth.

### The power of faithfulness

I think, generally speaking, it was the opinion of all the Latter-day Saints who met there. They were solid and sound in their beliefs. They were now free to worship God in their own way. Their chief concern was the success of their settlements made ". . . far away in the West. . ." ("Come, Come, ye Saints," *Hymns*, 13.) As I read their history and review their achievements, I conclude they were not mistaken nor led astray by selfish leaders. They had

found the truth—the truth which, as Jesus taught, would make them free.

They read the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price, and modern revelations. The contents of these books were facts, not opinions. The prophets did not speculate. They spoke as one who knows. There are no books so positive and forthright as the scriptures, modern and ancient. The prophets did not support their messages by argument. These messages were self-evident.

Most of the pioneers who came to the valleys of the mountains are now gone. They had faced relentless opposition and severe persecution, but here they were in their Zion, worshipping the true and living God. It was all in fulfillment of prophecy and they were happy and satisfied. Their spirit was unconquerable, their faith never flagged, and their perseverance and powers of endurance were remarkable. Their example of devotion and steadfastness has not been in vain. As a people we are proud of their achievements. We are equally proud of present accomplishments, and we glory in the prospects for the future.

May God's kingdom grow and increase until the earth is full of those who love the Lord their God, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

### President N. Eldon Tanner:

Elder Alma Sonne, Assistant to the Twelve, has just spoken to us.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the First Council of Seventy will now speak to us.

Brother McConkie—

## ELDER BRUCE R. McCONKIE

### *Of the First Council of the Seventy*

An apostle is a special witness of Christ. This morning we heard President David O. McKay, the senior apostle of God on earth, bear an inspired and fervent testimony of the divine sonship of our Lord.

### Sixty years an apostle

I think it would be of interest to the conference to know that it was on April 9, 1906, exactly 60 years ago today, that President David O. McKay was

ordained an apostle, a special witness of the Lord, a special witness of him who has redeemed us with his blood. Since that day, three-score years ago, this man who is now God's prophet on earth has stood as a light and a pillar of spiritual strength to the Church and to the world.

With all of you I rejoice and thank God for the ministry of that man who is the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who is the presiding high priest of God on earth, who in literal reality is an apostle, a prophet, a man of God, a man whom the Lord loves.

### An apostle fifty-six years

In this connection may I also note that it was on April 7, 1910, fifty-six years ago, that President Joseph Fielding Smith, also an oracle of God, was ordained to the holy apostleship to stand with President McKay in directing the affairs of God's kingdom on earth.

### Testify

That Jesus, of whom President McKay testified this morning, issued this invitation, "Come unto me. . . .

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me. . . ." (Matt. 11:28-29.)

He also said, ". . . this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.)

To know God in that full sense which will enable us to gain eternal salvation means that we must know what he knows, enjoy what he enjoys, experience what he experiences. In New Testament language, we must "be like him." (1 John 3:2.)

But before we can become like him, we must obey those laws that will enable us to acquire the character, perfections, and attributes that he possesses.

And before we can obey these laws, we must learn what they are; we must learn of Christ and his gospel. We must learn "that salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent." (Mosiah 3:18.) We

must learn that baptism under the hands of a legal administrator is essential to salvation and that after baptism we must keep the commandments and "press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men." (2 Ne. 31:20.)

Our revelation says: "The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth." (D&C 93:36.)

### Knowledge saves

Joseph Smith taught that "a man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge" of God and his saving truths (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 217) and that "it is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance" of Jesus Christ and the laws of his gospel. (D&C 131:6.)

We believe in gospel scholarship. We think that devout men everywhere, in and out of the Church, should seek spiritual truth, should come to know God, should learn his laws, and should strive to live in harmony with them. There are no truths as important as those that pertain to God and his gospel, to the pure religion that he has revealed, to the terms and conditions whereby we may gain an inheritance with him in his kingdom.

Thus we find Deity commanding: "Search these commandments. . . ." (D&C 1:37.)

". . . study my word which hath gone forth among the children of men. . . ." (D&C 11:22.)

". . . teach the principles of my gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in the which is the fulness of my gospel." (D&C 42:12.)

Thus we find Jesus saying: "Search the prophets. . . ." (3 Ne. 23:5.)

"Search the scriptures; for . . . they are they which testify of me." (John 5:39.)

"Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently. . . ." (3 Ne. 23:1.)

Christ is the great exemplar, the prototype of perfection and salvation: ". . . he said unto the children of men: Follow thou me. . . ." (2 Ne. 31:10.)

Also: ". . . what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am." (3 Ne. 27:27.)

I know of no better way to respond to Jesus' invitation, "learn of me" (Matt. 10:29), than to study the scriptures with a prayerful heart.

I know of no better way to heed his counsel, "follow thou me," than to live in harmony with the truths recorded in the scriptures, for as Nephi asked, ". . . can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father?" (2 Ne. 31:10.)

### Scriptures show the way

The Old Testament prophets reveal Christ's laws and foretell his Messianic ministry.

The Doctrine and Covenants records his mind and will and voice as he speaks to men in our day.

The Book of Mormon is an American witness of his divine sonship which has come forth "to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations." (Book of Mormon title page.)

The New Testament contains the witness of the ancient apostles that he ministered among men and set up his earthly kingdom in the meridian of time.

### The Lord's mortal ministry

I recently finished, primarily for my own personal enlightenment, an intensive, prayerful, and organized study of the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—those inspired accounts that speak plainly of our Lord's mortal ministry.

After concluding this study, I recorded my views and sentiments concerning the gospel accounts in these words:

"And so endeth the gospels—

"Those sacred scriptures which tell of the birth, ministry, mission, atoning sacrifice, resurrection, and ascension of the Son of God;

"Those revealed records which teach with power and conviction the eternal

truths which men must believe to gain salvation in God's kingdom;

"Those true histories of the life of Christ which lead men to love the Lord and to keep his commandments;

"Those sacred and solemn testimonies which open the door to the receipt of peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come.

"In this holy writ, in these gospel accounts, in these testimonies of the life of our Lord—

"We see Jesus—the Almighty, the Creator of all things from the beginning—receiving a tabernacle of clay in the womb of Mary.

"We stand by an Infant in a manger and hear heavenly voices hail his birth.

"We observe him teaching in the temple and confounding the worldly wise when but twelve years of age.

"We watch him in Jordan, immersed under the hands of John, while the heavens open and the personage of the Holy Ghost descends like a dove; and we hear the voice of the Father speak approving words.

"We go with him into a wilderness place apart and behold the devil come, tempting, enticing, seeking to lead him from God-directed paths.

"We view in wonder and amazement his miracles: He speaks and the blind see; at his touch the deaf hear; he commands and the lame leap, paralytics rise from their beds, lepers are cleansed, and devils desert their ill-gotten abodes.

"We rejoice at the miracle of crippled souls being made whole, of disciples who forsake all to follow him, of saints who are born again.

"We stand in awe as the elements obey his voice: He walks on the water; at his word storms cease; he curses the fig tree and it withers; water becomes wine when he wills it; a few small fish and a little bread feed thousands because of his word.

"We sit with the Lord of life, as a man, in the intimacy of a family circle in Bethany; we weep with him at Lazarus' tomb; we fast and pray at his side when he communes with his

Father; we eat and sleep with him and walk with him down the lanes and in the villages of Palestine; we see him hungry, thirsty, weary, and marvel that a God should seek such mortal experiences.

"We drink deeply of his teachings; we hear parables such as never man spake before; we learn what it means to hear one with authority announce his Father's doctrine.

"We see him:

"In sorrow—weeping for his friends, lamenting over doomed Jerusalem;

"In compassion—forgiving sins, caring for his mother, making men whole spiritually and physically;

"In anger—cleansing his Father's house, blazing forth with righteous indignation at its desecration;

"In triumph—entering Jerusalem amid shouts of hosanna to the Son of David, transfigured before his disciples on the mount, standing in resurrected glory on a mountain in Galilee.

"We recline with him in an upper room, apart from the world, and hear some of the greatest sermons of all time as we partake of the emblems of his flesh and blood.

"We pray with him in Gethsemane and tremble under the weight of the burden he bore as great drops of blood come from every pore; we bow our heads in shame as Judas plants the traitor's kiss.

"We stand at his side before Annas and again before Calaphas; we go with him to Pilate and to Herod and back to Pilate; we partake of the pain, feel the insults, shudder at the mocking, and are revolted at the gross injustice and mass hysteria which hurl him inescapably toward the cross.

"We sorrow with his mother and others at Golgotha as Roman soldiers drive nails into his hands and feet; we shudder as the spear pierces his side, and live with him the moment when he voluntarily gives up his life.

"We are in the garden when the angels roll back the stone, when he comes forth in glorious immortality; we walk with him on the Emmaus road; we kneel in the upper room, feel the nail marks in his hands and feet

and thrust our hands into his side; and with Thomas we exclaim: 'My Lord and my God!'

"We walk to Bethany and there behold, as angels attend, his ascension to be with his Father; and our joy is full, for we have seen God with man.

"We see God in him—for we know that God was in Christ manifesting himself to the world so that all men could know those holy beings whom to know is eternal life.

"And now what shall we say more of Christ? Whose Son is he? What works hath he wrought? Who today can testify of these things?

"Let it now be written once again—and it is the testimony of all the prophets of all the ages—that he is the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father, the promised Messiah, the Lord God of Israel, our Redeemer and Savior; that he came into the world to manifest the Father, to reveal anew the gospel, to be the great Exemplar, to work out the infinite and eternal atonement; and that not many days hence he shall come again to reign personally upon the earth and to save and redeem those who love and serve him.

"And now let it also be written, both on earth and in heaven, that this disciple, who has prepared this work, does himself also know of the truth of those things of which the prophets have testified. For these things have been revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit of God, and he therefore testifies that Jesus is Lord of all, the Son of God, through whose name salvation comes." (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, pp. 873-876.)

This testimony I renew and reaffirm in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### President N. Eldon Tanner:

President Bruce R. McConkie of the First Council of Seventy has just spoken to us.

The congregation and choir will now stand and sing, "Praise to the Man," conducted by Ladd R. Cropper.

Following this, Elder Henry D. Tay-