

Saturday, April 9

Second Day

blessings are predicated upon obedience and a willingness to obey his commandments. Moses in his day promised the children of Israel:

“And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:

“And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God.” (Deut. 28:1-2.)

### Blessings for the faithful

And now in the latter days the Lord has again made it crystal clear that he is willing to bless the faithful. That is strongly evident in this assurance: “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.” (D&C 82:10.)

This harmonizes with the statement that the Prophet Joseph declared he had made a rule in his life and followed each day. It was simply this: “When the Lord commands, do it!” (*Documentary History of the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 170.)

Now, may I emphasize one more

thought? In this year of 1966 renewed emphasis is placed on the importance of the home and the cultivating of the spirit of love therein. With listening ears and responsive hearts, we should hearken to the words of our beloved prophet, President McKay, who has counseled: “. . . let us never lose sight of the principle of obedience.

Obedience is heaven's first law, and it is the law of home. There can be no true happiness in the home without obedience—obedience obtained, not through physical force, but through the divine element of love.” (*Treasures of Life*, p. 329.)

That we may be blessed with the rich rewards that come to the faithful through observing the beautiful principle of obedience to all that the Lord commands us is my humble prayer, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

### President N. Eldon Tanner:

Elder Henry D. Taylor, Assistant to the Twelve, has just spoken to us.

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley of the Council of the Twelve, will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Richard L. Evans.

## ELDER GORDON B. HINCKLEY

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

My dear brethren and sisters, I approach this responsibility with a prayer in my heart that the Lord will prompt me by his Holy Spirit, as I add my word of testimony.

I have on the desk in my home a small metal box. It is about 12 inches square and half as high. On its face are six knobs and two dials. Now and again, when I have an hour, it becomes my plaything. It is a short-wave radio. Turning the knobs, I listen to London, Washington, Tokyo, Peking, Moscow, Havana, and other great capitals of the world.

### Battles for the minds of men

The voices I hear are persuasive, seductive, fascinating, and confusing. Speaking across the earth, they are part of a mighty battle that is being waged for the minds of men. They are aimed at persuasion in political philosophy. There are voices of democracy competing with voices of Communism, and each is winning converts according to the discernment and the judgment of listeners.

The stakes are high, the weapons are sophisticated, the methods are clever.

### Battles for the faith of men

There is a comparable battle being waged for the faith of men, but the lines are not always so clearly drawn, for even among the forces of Christianity there are those who would destroy the divinity of the Christ in whose name they speak. They might be disregarded if their voices were not so seductive, if their influence were not so far-reaching, if their reasoning were not so subtle.

Tomorrow is Easter. At sunrise in the morning multitudes will gather on a thousand hills to welcome the dawn of the Easter day and to remind themselves of the story of the Christ, whose resurrection they will commemorate. In language both beautiful and hopeful, preachers of many faiths will recount the story of the empty tomb. To them—and to you—I raise this question: "Do you actually believe it?"

#### "Do you actually believe?"

Do you actually believe that Jesus was the Son of God, the literal offspring of the Father?

Do you believe that the voice of God, the Eternal Father, was heard above the waters of Jordan declaring, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"? (Matt. 3:17.)

Do you believe that this same Jesus was the worker of miracles, the healer of the sick, the restorer of the infirm, the giver of life to the dead?

Do you believe that following his death on Calvary's hill and his burial in Joseph's tomb, he came forth alive the third day?

Do you actually believe that he yet lives—real, vital, and personal—and that he will come again as promised by the angels at his ascension?

Do you actually believe these things? If you do, then you are part of a shrinking body of literalists who more and more are being smiled at by philosophers, who more and more are being ridiculed by certain educators, and who more and more are being considered "out of it" by a growing coterie of ministers of religion and influential theologians.

### Assassins of faith

I have recently read a series of provocative writings setting forth the clever reasoning of American, British, and European theologians to "de-myth," as it is called, the story of Jesus of Nazareth. I quote from a capable Protestant layman who writes:

"The most disruptive questions are coming from theologians who . . . are questioning every old concept. They even suggest that maybe the word 'God' should be discarded, since it has become meaningless to so many people.

"Stripped of all else, the question the liberal theologians are asking is the old one that has time and again sundered the Christian church: Who was Jesus?"

"The revolutionists . . . turn to the Bible as a source of truth, but their Bible is an expurgated version with embarrassing references to abnormal events edited out. 'De-mythologized,' one says. 'De-literalized,' says another.

"What the new wave casts up is 'religionless' Christianity; a faith grounded on a philosophic system, instead of being suspended precariously from old myths." (*Fortune*, December 1965, p. 173.)

So, in the eyes of these intellectuals, these are myths—the birth of Jesus as the Son of God of whom the angels sang on Judea's plains, the worker of miracles who healed the sick and raised the dead, the Christ resurrected from the grave, the ascension and the promised return.

These modern theologians strip him of his divinity and then wonder why men do not worship him.

These clever scholars have taken from Jesus the mantle of godhood and have left only a man. They have tried to accommodate him to their own narrow thinking. They have robbed him of his divine sonship and taken from the world its rightful King.

While reading of this very effective and growing "de-literalization" process and of its evident effect on the faith of those who are its victims, particularly the youth who are caught up in this sophistry, the words anciently

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spoken by the prophet Amos come home with new clarity:

### Causes of "famine in the land"

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord:

"And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.

"In that day shall the fair virgins and the young men faint for thirst.

". . . even they shall fall, and never rise up again." (Amos 8:11-14.)

How descriptive those words of many of the youth of our day, the young men and the young women who in their hearts hunger for a faith that will satisfy, but who, spurning it because of the manner in which it is offered, "faint for thirst" and "fall, and never rise up again."

### Spiritual plenty in the modern world

To these I give our solemn witness that God is not dead, except as he is viewed with a lifeless interpretation.

Is a belief in the divinity of our Lord out of date in the twentieth century? The great scientific age of which we are a part does not demand a denial of the miracle that is Jesus. Rather, there was never a time in all the history of man that made more believable that which in the past might have been regarded as supernatural and impossible.

How can anyone today regard anything as impossible?

To those acquainted with the giant strides of biological science, where men are beginning to peek into the very nature of life and its creation, the miracle of the birth of Jesus as the Son of God certainly becomes more plausible, even to the doubter.

Further, it is not difficult to believe that he, possessed of knowledge commensurate with the task of creating the earth, could heal the sick, restore the infirm, return the dead to

life. It may have been difficult to believe these things in medieval times, but can one reasonably doubt the possibility of such while witnessing the miracles of healing and restoration that occur daily?

Is the ascension so impossible a thing to comprehend after sitting in one's living room and watching the lift-off of Gemini 7 as it rose into the heavens to seek out with unerring accuracy its companion, Gemini 6, then orbiting the earth at more than 17,000 miles an hour?

Miracles? I should think so. This is the age of miracles. During my brief lifetime, I have witnessed more of scientific advance than did all of my forebears together during the previous 5,000 years.

With so much of what appears miraculous about me every day, it is easy to believe in the miracle of Jesus.

But a witness of the Lord is not obtained by observation of the accomplishments of men. Such observation makes reasonable a belief in his birth, life, death, and resurrection. But there is needed something more than a reasonable belief. There is needed an understanding of his unique and incomparable position as the divine Redeemer and an enthusiasm for him and his message as the Son of God.

That understanding and that enthusiasm are available to all who will pay the price. They are not incompatible with higher education, but they will not come only of reading philosophy. No, they come of a simpler process. The things of God are understood by the Spirit of God. (1 Cor. 2:11.) So declares the word of revelation.

### Simple ways to the abundant life

The acquisition of understanding and enthusiasm for the Lord comes from following simple rules, and in conclusion, I should like to suggest three, elementary in their concept, almost trite in their repetition, but fundamental in their application and fruitful in their result. I suggest them particularly to our young people.

**Search the scriptures,—they testify**

The first is to read—to read the word of the Lord. I know that with the demands of your studies there is little time to read anything else. But I promise you that if you will read the words of that writing which we call scripture, there will come into your heart an understanding and a warmth that will be pleasing to experience. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." (John 5:39.) Read, for instance, the Gospel of John from its beginning to its end. Let the Lord speak for himself to you, and his words will come with a quiet conviction that will make the words of his critics meaningless. Read also the testament of the New World, the Book of Mormon, brought forth as a witness "that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations." (Book of Mormon title page.)

**Serve the Lord**

The next is to serve—to serve in the work of the Lord. Spiritual strength is like physical strength; it is like the muscle of my arm. It grows only as it is nourished and exercised.

The cause of Christ does not need your doubts; it needs your strength and time and talents; and as you exercise these in service, your faith will grow and your doubts will wane.

The Lord declared: "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. 10:39.)

These words have something more than a cold theological meaning. They are a statement of a law of life—that as we lose ourselves in a great cause we find ourselves—and there is no greater cause than that of the Master.

**Pray . . . "ask and it shall be given you"**

The third is to pray. Speak with your Eternal Father in the name of

his Beloved Son. "Behold," he says, "I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. 3:20.)

This is his invitation, and the promise is sure. It is unlikely that you will hear voices from heaven, but there will come a heaven-sent assurance, peaceful and certain.

In that great conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, the Lord declared: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Then he went on to say, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:6, 8.)

I do not hesitate to promise that so it will be with you. If you will read the word of the Lord, if you will serve in his cause, if in prayer you will talk with him, your doubts will leave; and shining through all of the confusion of philosophy, so-called higher criticism, and negative theology will come the witness of the Holy Spirit that Jesus is in very deed the Son of God, born in the flesh, the Redeemer of the world resurrected from the grave, the Lord who shall come to reign as King of kings. It is your opportunity so to know. It is your obligation so to find out. God bless you so to do, I pray as I add my personal witness in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**President N. Eldon Tanner:**

We have just listened to Elder Gordon B. Hinckley of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Richard L. Evans of the Council of the Twelve will be our concluding speaker.