

Creator. He is our Savior and Redeemer. He is our advocate with the Father. It was he who made possible universal resurrection. It was he, with his Father, who appeared to Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove.

I testify that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that it was under his direction that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in this dispensation for the last time, and that President David O.

McKay is his living Prophet today. I so testify these truths in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### President N. Eldon Tanner

We have just listened to Elder Eldred G. Smith, Patriarch to the Church.

Bishop John H. Vandenberg, Presiding Bishop of the Church, will be our concluding speaker.

### Bishop John H. Vandenberg

#### Presiding Bishop of the Church

A few years ago I read a story of a mother who was running and playing with her three-year-old daughter. The mother told her daughter that when she was a little girl her mother had played with her in a very similar manner.

Upon hearing this, the little girl looked up with inquisitive eyes and said, "Mother, where was I when you were a little girl?"

From the lips of this small girl comes a question that reaches beyond the understanding of most of mankind. This touches on the questions of "Who are we?" and "What are we doing here?"

William Wordsworth presents to us his inspiration in this excerpt from his poem, "Intimations of Immortality":

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:

The soul that rises with us, our life's star,

Hath had elsewhere its setting,

And cometh from afar:

Not in entire forgetfulness,

And not in utter nakedness,

But trailing clouds of glory do we come

From God who is our home:

Heaven lies about us in our infancy!"

#### Pre-existence of man

These thoughts reiterate what the prophets have told us in the scriptures. The Lord told Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew

thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." (Jer. 1:5.)

The testimony of Abraham sheds further light on the questions, "Who are we?" and "What are we doing here?" He said:

"Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;

"And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.

"And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell." (Abr. 3:22-24.)

This disclosure by the Lord gives significant meaning and purpose to life. Life, then, is not just a period isolated between birth and death. The Lord further disclosed to Abraham:

"And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

Friday, April 5

First Day

“. . . and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.” (Abr. 3:25-26.)

### Divine purpose to life

For those who are not aware of this divine purpose, life may seem to be a mysterious journey with few landmarks and with no real objectives. They may seek only that which their eyes can see. Their only objective may be material wealth and the embracing of worldly pleasures. Moral standards may be applied only when it is convenient. In a sense, they worship and make gods of the physical, whatever it may be.

It is the prophets who are burdened with the charge of turning the hearts of the people from the worship of false gods. In the wisdom of God, he has provided his children with spiritual leadership to keep the true and real purpose of life uppermost in their minds and hearts, without which the people soon dwindle in unbelief and aimless living. “Where there is no vision, the people perish. . . .” (Prov. 29:18.)

### Futility in false idols

The prophet Elijah found his countrymen in just such a state, putting their faith in various idolatrous gods, or Baal. They had their false priests, and each locality had its own particular idol. Such idols were worshiped through burnt offerings, festivals, human sacrifice, and gross sensuality.

Upon finding this condition among the people, Elijah took action. He prevailed upon Ahab to gather all the people, including the priests of Baal, together unto Mount Carmel, and then Elijah said to this assembly: “How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. . . .” (1 Kings 18:21.)

The failure of the priests of Baal, as Elijah caused them to test their gods, stands as a classic example of the futility of following or pursuing

false idols. But the charge given by Elijah to the people, “If the Lord be God, follow him,” has stood. Not in history has it ever failed mankind. It stands even today.

It might be asked, “If the Lord be God, why should we follow him?” The most striking answer to this query lies in the lives of those who have “followed” him.

### Followers of Christ

Christ the Lord said to Peter: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Peter “straightway left [his] nets, and followed him.” (Matt. 4:19-20.) What happened? From a simple fisherman, Peter was transformed into a courageous leader. On one occasion he was called before Jewish leaders and warned not to “teach in the name of Jesus.” With great courage, Peter defied the order, and rebuked the rulers, saying: “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:18-20.)

To the woman whom the scribes and Pharisees had found in sin, Christ opened a whole new life by admonishing her to follow his counsel. To her he said: “Go and sin no more.” No longer would her conscience be burdened by her pursuing a life of sin. She could face life anew—with a purpose. Her whole life could now be refocused upon that which is noble and uplifting. All this could be hers by “following him.”

Christ said: “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be. . . .” (John 12:26.) Following him is a day-by-day process. It must be the conscious objective of every hour. Even today those who will serve the Master and follow the directions of his Prophet can taste the joy of service.

### Appreciation for home teacher

Just the other day I received a written testimony from a mother expressing appreciation for a servant of the Lord. This servant, a home teacher, was

simply following the Lord's assignment to "watch over the Church always, and be with and strengthen them." (D&C 20:53.) She writes:

"My husband had taken some Scouts to the Merit Badge Pow-Wow at B.Y.U. It was a two-hundred mile drive so they had left at 4 o'clock in the morning. When I awakened, my main concern was for their safety as it was snowing and blowing. My eight-year-old boy had already awakened and left on his bicycle for the corral, about a mile away, to do the chores. Suddenly there he was in the bedroom with a big tear in each eye.

"Mama, we've got two little lambs out to the farm and they are wet and shaking, and I tried to call you from the service station but you had to have a dime, so I just wrapped my coat around them and rode home as fast as I could."

"My husband had acquired a small herd of ewes only last fall as a father-son project, but my son and I were completely inexperienced in the process of 'lambing.' I knew that we had to have help from someone. Whom could we call? I don't recall which one of us thought of it first but suddenly both of us knew it would be our home teacher.

"Within twenty minutes he was at the corral with his eight-year-old boy and mine. He stayed for three hours, working with the lambs every minute. The sheep had not been sheared, as the expected lambing date was still a month away, but he understood and did those things which needed to be done. One lamb looked quite strong, but there was not much hope for the second. Just before dinner he returned to the house with one of the lambs in a box. Would I try to get it warm? He was taking the other one to his home to work with it. He would be back within two hours to take them both back to their mother for nursing.

"I am certain that he spent over six hours that Saturday at our farm working with our sheep and our boy. As a result we now have two healthy lambs and an even more beloved home

teacher. I cannot tell you how much our eight-year-old boy thinks of the home teacher who worked side by side with him through one entire day teaching by example the love that is our gospel."<sup>1</sup>

### Follow the Lord

No better example could be given of what it means to follow the Lord, for God has commanded that we shall "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," and "love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matt. 22:37, 39.)

William George Jordan said: "Man has two creators, his God and himself. The first creator furnishes him the raw materials for his life—the laws and conformity with which he can make that life what he will. The second creator—himself—has marvelous powers he rarely realizes. It is what a man makes of himself that counts."

To those who ask, "Where was I when . . . ?" the answer is, "With God—waiting to come to earth to prove yourself." The Lord is God; let us follow him. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### President N. Eldon Tanner

Bishop John H. Vandenberg of the Presiding Bishopric has been our concluding speaker.

The Saturday morning session will be broadcast direct by numerous radio and television stations, and recorded for transmission on Sunday morning to many television stations in the eastern and central parts of the United States.

A video tape of Saturday morning's session of Conference will be flown from the mainland and broadcast Sunday morning in Hawaii and to Alaska, and broadcast at both Anchorage and Fairbanks.

Morning sessions of Saturday and Sunday will be carried from the Tabernacle over direct oceanic cables to a large number of members and friends assembled in many chapels throughout Great Britain, Germany,

<sup>1</sup>Letter from Mrs. Harl E. Judd, Cedar City, Utah.