

## Elder LeGrand Richards

## Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Brethren and sisters, I rejoice in the privilege of attending this great conference with you and listening to the testimonies of my brethren and hearing the counsel and the advice they have given. I would that all of our Father's children the world over would not only listen in but would also obey their counsel and their advice; this then would be a better world in which to live. In your presence this morning I want to express my love for my Father in heaven and for his Son Jesus Christ, and for his great atoning sacrifice, and for the great honor that is mine to be one of his witnesses in the earth, and I thank you Latter-day Saints for your love and your kindness to me.

**Know God other than by hearsay**

The story is told that there was a new minister who moved into the community where Thomas Carlisle lived, and he went to the office of Carlisle and asked this question: "What do the people of this community need more than anything else?" And Carlisle's answer was: "They need a man who knows God other than by hearsay."

You know, I have thought a lot about that. I think what this world needs today more than anything else is to know God other than by hearsay, to know why he created this earth and why we are here, where we are going, and how to get there, so that we will know what life is really for. I have come to feel that one of the greatest necessities even in this Church is that we have a strong testimony, the power of conviction. As I read the holy scriptures, it seems to me they make it very plain that we, his children, through obedience can know God other than by hearsay. Jesus said:

"... My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (John 7:16-17.)

This is a promise to all men, and this promise is just as binding today as when Jesus spoke it: if we will do the will of the Father, we may know other than by hearsay that his message is from God, the Eternal Father.

Then, you will remember, he said: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.)

This is a promise that we might know him, or at least it infers that we might know him other than by hearsay.

**We speak that we do know**

You remember that when Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, he indicated that he knew he was a prophet sent of God, for no man did the things that he did save God was with him. Then after he had explained to Nicodemus, as Brother [Marion G.] Romney made plain today, the message of baptism—to take upon him the name of Christ—Nicodemus could not understand him, and Jesus said, after repeating it: "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" He said: "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness." (John 3:10-11.) Every true servant of God who is sent in his name to administer the holy ordinances of the gospel speaks that he does know, and testifies that he has seen, as our brethren here in this conference have done during the past two days.

Now, that is the strength of this Church. Years ago, when our missionaries were being severely persecuted in England, the English government sent a representative to Utah to study our people. They wanted to know what it was that caused the Church to keep sending its missionaries there when they were being so persecuted. After that individual had spent some time in our midst, he returned to his native land and told

them that the black secret of Mormonism was the fact that each member knew he had the truth. Now, isn't that what we ought to have? Isn't that just what Jesus promised—that if you will do the will of the Father, you "shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself"? (John 7:17.)

### God's eternal truth

A few years ago a group of ministers were passing through Salt Lake en route to Los Angeles to attend a ministerial convention. They stopped over in Salt Lake City. They wanted to ask some questions about our teachings, and arrangements were made for them to meet one of the Twelve in the conference room in the Church Office Building. After that member had answered their questions, he bore his solemn witness that he knew that Jesus was the Christ, that Joseph Smith was his prophet, that the Book of Mormon was true. He knew it other than by hearsay. Then, when he closed his testimony, he turned to those ministers and said, "Which one of you can testify that you know that you have the truth?" After a brief pause, the leader of the group said, "Well, we hope we are right."

When I was a missionary over in Holland, in the city of Utrecht, there was a seminary where young men were trained for the ministry. They used to come and attend our meetings, and then they would remain afterwards and discuss religious principles with us. I haven't time to go into detail, but one night I proved to one of those young men that they were not teaching the principles of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he turned to me and said: "Do you think the Lord will hold us responsible for teaching things that we know are not fully in accord with the scriptures?"

I said that I would rather let the apostle Paul answer that question, for Paul said, "... though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (Gal. 1:8.) Brothers and

sisters, we have God's eternal truth, and I thank him for it.

### Experience of the Apostle Paul

I would just like to remind you now of the experience of the apostle Paul. You will remember how he persecuted the saints, and then on the way to Damascus for the same purpose, a light appeared brighter than the noonday sun, and those who were with him all fell to the earth, and a voice from heaven said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard . . . to kick against the pricks." And Saul said, "Who art thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." (Acts 26:14-15.) Then we follow Paul's great ministry, as described by the Savior, and he was persecuted as no others of the brethren were. He was flayed and stoned; then he stood before the great governor Festus and King Agrippa, in bonds, and they desired to hear from Paul.

There Paul related his marvelous experience, for he knew other than by hearsay that Jesus was the Christ. When he had finished his testimony, Festus said: "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad," to which Paul replied: "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." And then Agrippa replied: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." (Acts 26:24-25, 28.) And then you remember that Paul said, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." (Acts 26:29.)

### Story of Joseph Smith

There is another great story that all the world ought to know that is comparable to the one I have just related of the apostle Paul, and that is the story of Joseph Smith, who in his youth saw the confusion in his community and knew not which church he should join. Then he read the words of James:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men

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liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." (Jas. 1:5.)

Joseph said that he realized that if any man needed wisdom, he did, and he went into the woods to pray. And just like that glorious light that shone over Paul, brighter than the noonday sun, after Joseph had had the powers of darkness fall upon him until he felt like his very life would be crushed from his body, a light appeared to him brighter than the noonday sun. God was repeating in substance an experience such as Paul had to usher in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. He saw in that light two glorious messengers, the Father and his Son. He was told by Jesus that he should join none of the churches, because they all taught for doctrine the commandments of men. Later he bore his testimony, and he said he felt like Paul of old. He could not understand why people would persecute him for telling the truth. You know, he was in prison some thirty times, and he finally sealed his testimony with his blood. He said he knew that he had seen a vision; he knew that God knew it; and he dared not deny it, because he knew that by so doing he would offend God and come under his condemnation. (See Joseph Smith 2:25.)

### Testimony worth more than all else

I would like to say to all those who are within the sound of my voice this day, and who are not members of this Church and do not know the truth of this testimony other than by hearsay: I promise you, as one of his apostles of this dispensation, that if you will study his message and ask God, the Eternal Father, he will manifest the truth of this unto you, and it will be worth more to you than all else in this world.

I was back in Washington, D.C., holding a conference a few years ago, and we had over 2,000 present in that building. We heard from the stake president, a multi-millionaire. He stood before those people and told them that the greatest thing he had and

owned in all this world was his witness that this is the truth and that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. The next man we called may be sitting in this audience. He was the head of one of the government organizations in Washington. He bore the same testimony.

Then we called a president of a great university, and he bore the same testimony.

Then we called a new convert, a young mother with two children, and she stood there and told them that when the missionaries came to her home, they read to her the promise in the Book of Mormon that if she would read it and ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ the Lord, he would manifest the truth of that book unto her by the power of the Holy Ghost. She said she got down on her knees and asked God if it were true, and then she read it, and she said her whole soul was illumined.

Then we called on a returned missionary who had just spent three years in the mission field at his own expense or that of his family. I had talked with him before the meeting and said, "Did you feel like the time you spent in the mission field was a waste of time, that you should have been home getting your schooling and getting ready to marry?" "Oh," he said, "Bishop, if the brethren want to make me happy, just let them load me on a plane in the morning and send me back to the Argentine."

### Readiness to testify

Then I said to that great audience of over 2,000: "Which one of you, if called upon, could come and occupy this pulpit and testify that you know beyond any shadow of doubt that this work is divine, that it is the work of God, the Eternal Father, that Jesus is the Christ, and that Joseph Smith was his prophet?" As far as I could tell, there wasn't one hand that didn't go up.

If I were to ask that same question here today, there wouldn't be a hand in these 10,000 present that wouldn't go up and bear witness that God has

manifest the truth of this work unto them other than by hearsay, just as when Jesus said to his disciples: "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?"

"And they said, some say that thou art . . . one of the prophets.

" . . . But whom say ye that I am?"

And Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

And then Jesus said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 16:13-17.)

By that same power we know other than by hearsay that this work is

divine, and that is my witness to you this day in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### President Hugh B. Brown

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing "America the Beautiful," after which Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Council of the Twelve will be our concluding speaker.

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Selection by the choir: "America the Beautiful."

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#### President Hugh B. Brown

Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Council of the Twelve will speak to us.

### Elder Thomas S. Monson

#### Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Two thousand years ago the Son of Man was born into a world like ours—*asunder*. Sixty-three years had passed since Roman legions under Pompey had conquered Palestine and taken Jerusalem. The helmets, broadswords, and eagles of the Roman legionary were everywhere to be seen. The oppressive yoke of the Caesars was universally felt.

#### Advent of promised Messiah

Deep in the depths of human hearts there dwelt a longing, even a yearning, for the advent of the promised Messiah. When will he come? This was the unanswered question on the lips of the righteous.

Generations had lived and died since the Prophet Isaiah had declared: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son. . . ." (Isa. 7:14.) ". . . the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isa. 9:6.)

With such a promise ringing in his ears, can you and I appreciate the supreme joy and overwhelming exultation that coursed through one called Philip when he heard the Savior of

the world speak unto him those immortal words, that divine injunction, "Follow me"? The dawn of promise had dispelled the night of despair. The King of kings, the Lord of lords had come.

Such knowledge could not be hidden, nor could Philip of Bethsaida keep to himself such glad tidings. "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

"And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Phillip saith unto him, Come and see." (John 1:45-46.)

Shall we, too, join Nathanael? Come and see.

#### Can any good come out of Nazareth?

Could Nazareth be so honored? Nazareth, the most disregarded valley in a despised province of a conquered land?

Nazareth, just 80 miles from Jerusalem, was situated on the main trade route that ran from Damascus through the Galilean cities to the Mediterranean coast at Acre. This, however,