

Saturday, October 5

Second Day

“ . . . And Moses prayed for the people.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

“And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.” (Num. 21:7-9.)

“How silly,” some must have said. “How can such a thing cure me? I’ll not show my stupidity by paying any attention,” and some would not look.

In First Nephi we read that “after they were bitten he prepared a way that they might be healed; and the labor which they had to perform was to look; and because of the simpleness of the way, or the easiness of it, there were many who perished.” (1 Ne. 17:41.)

The lesson is enlarged in the Gospel of John.

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

“That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:14-16.)

Great witness from conferences

And today many say, “How silly! How could accepting Christ save me?”

They will not turn their heads to look nor incline their ears to hear. They ignore the great witness that comes from these conferences. We ought to, indeed we must, heed the counsel of these men, for the Lord said, “What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.

“For behold, and lo, the Lord is God, and the Spirit beareth record, and the record is true, and the truth abideth forever and ever. Amen.” (D&C 1:38-39.)

Though it is my privilege to serve among them, I have not forgotten for one moment that these men, the brethren, are the servants of the Lord. And individually, independent of their knowing it, I know and testify that David O. McKay is a prophet of God, that Jesus is the Christ, and that this conference is his voice speaking to his children. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

He to whom we have just listened is Elder Boyd K. Packer, Assistant to the Twelve.

Elder Theodore M. Burton, Assistant to the Twelve will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Council of the Twelve, as the concluding speaker of this conference session.

Elder Theodore M. Burton

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

My dear brothers and sisters, and all who are watching and listening to these messages: If you were to approach a military installation some dark night, you would be immediately challenged by a sentry with the question, “Who goes there?” If you were to answer that challenge with the word “friend,” the sentry would answer, “Advance, friend, and give the password.” If you were neither able to give

the password nor to identify yourself, you would be placed in an embarrassing and a dangerous position.

Yet millions of those presently living on the earth are totally unprepared for death and to enter through the gates of the celestial kingdom. They know neither the password nor will they be able to identify themselves as a son or a daughter of God. They have never taken upon themselves the name of the

Only Begotten Son of God, nor passed the necessary tests of faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless, this identification is needed for entry into the kingdom of heaven, which kingdom we can refer to as the family of God, our Eternal Father.

Importance of records

It is not only necessary to have had this ordinance work done on the earth but also to have it properly recorded here by a legal administrator who is authorized to make a record that is binding on earth as well as in heaven. John the Revelator must have been contemplating this very thing when he wrote:

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." (Rev. 20:12.)

These books spoken of must be the books which contain the record of their works upon the earth and must refer to the records which are kept upon the earth. The other book spoken of as the "book of life" is the record which is kept in heaven. Joseph Smith explained in a letter preserved as Section 128 of the Doctrine and Covenants that whatever you record on earth shall be recorded in heaven, and whatsoever you do not record on earth shall not be recorded in heaven.

Auditing of records

We are presently engaged in a process of simplifying the recording of records both for the living and for the dead. We are coordinating the records of the Genealogical Society, the Church Historian's Office, and the office of the Presiding Bishopric into a master file. Our ward clerks are auditing all records of living members of the Church to make certain that their records are correct and complete. As a result of this survey we have discovered many cases where, through oversight or carelessness in recording names, dates, and places, errors have

been entered onto the record. What is really shocking is that sometimes no records are found of baptisms, confirmations, or priesthood ordinations or ordinances.

I have been shocked at the complacency and the indifference of some persons when these errors have been called to their attention. Quite commonly the answer is given: "Well, I know that I was baptized, [or ordained, or endowed] and that is all I need to know. It must be recorded *someplace*, and it is up to you [the clerk] to find it."

This is a very wrong and dangerous assumption. It is up to the *individual* to see that the ordinance is properly recorded. It is *my* responsibility to see that my works are properly recorded. If I cannot find this record through diligent searching, or if I cannot establish a record through proper witnesses who can testify that the ordinance was performed, then I would go to my bishop, state my problem, and ask that I immediately be permitted to be baptized and to have my ordination to the priesthood and my endowment ratified in order to establish a proper record on the books of the Church.

Responsibility for correct records

No mere record alone will assure me my exaltation in the celestial kingdom. That exaltation must be earned by a righteous life on earth, by virtue, love, obedience, and conformance to every law given by God. In fact, the scripture states: "And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall forsake all evil and cleave unto all good, that ye shall live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God." (D&C 98:11.)

It is, however, my responsibility to see that my name is also listed on the records of God's family on earth and that my conformance to the necessary gospel ordinances has been properly recorded on the books of the Church.

My salvation and my exaltation depend upon these two principles of righteous living and conforming to the written requirements of the gospel. This is my blessing that is in danger, not that of someone else. It is my re-

possibility to live righteously and to establish a proper record for me at once. This is no time to become indignant, to stand on my rights, or to take a chance on future rectification of my records. If my future blessings are in danger because of missing identification, I must humble myself and do whatever is necessary to assure myself that my record and the records of my family are properly recorded and protected.

Proof from records

As I read the scriptures, I tremble for those who do not live righteously and who do not have a record of conforming with God's laws. Even if I were a literal descendant of Aaron, lived a righteous life, and held an inherited right to the office of the bishopric, there are additional standards to be met:

"And a literal descendant of Aaron, also, must be designated by this Presidency [referring to the First Presidency], and found worthy, and anointed, and ordained under the hands of this Presidency, otherwise they are not legally authorized to officiate in their priesthood.

"But, by virtue of the decree concerning their right of the priesthood descending from father to son, they may claim their anointing if at any time they can prove their lineage, or do ascertain it by revelation from the Lord under the hands of the above named Presidency." (D&C 68:20-21.)

I emphasize that even the Presiding Bishop in such a case, in addition to a life of righteousness and a claim to be a descendant of Aaron, must prove his lineage, and this must be done from the records.

Records of priesthood ordinations

Let me read a more emphatic statement about the records of priesthood ordinations in general:

"And all they who are not found written in the book of remembrance shall find none inheritance in that day, but they shall be cut asunder, and their portion shall be appointed them among unbelievers, where are wailing and gnashing of teeth.

"These things I say not of myself [in other words this is a commandment or a decision of God the Eternal Father]; therefore, as the Lord speaketh, he will also fulfill.

"And they who are of the High Priesthood, whose names are not found written in the book of the law, or that are found to have apostatized, or to have been cut off from the church, as well as the lesser priesthood, or the members, in that day [in other words, every single one of us is subject to this same requirement] shall not find an inheritance among the saints of the Most High;

"Therefore, it shall be done unto them as unto the children of the priest, as will be found recorded in the second chapter and sixty-first and second verses of Ezra." (D&C 85:9-12.)

When their genealogy was not found, they were put from the priesthood because they could not prove that they had conformed to the commandments of God and had truly received the priesthood.

Basis for judgment

I pray that everyone who hears my voice will make certain that his or her name and that of his or her ancestors through whom he obtains his heritage upon the earth are found properly recorded upon the books of the kingdom of God. Only in this way can one be sure that this portion of his conformance to God's commandments concerning his works upon the earth has been properly recorded. Only when you know the proper password and have a valid identification of yourself and your lineage can you enter through the gates of heaven to claim your eternal exaltation.

I urge all clerks and recorders to realize how very important your work is in the plan of salvation. The proper recording of information is most important, for it will form an important portion of the basis on which we as a people are to be judged. A clerk's calling is as much a spiritual calling as any we have in the Church, and must never be regarded merely as a technicality.

Brothers and sisters, I testify that we will live again, that life after death is real, and that we can only claim an inheritance among the mansions of our Father in heaven when we can prove our claim to it through living righteously and maintaining our names in righteous fellowship upon the records of God's kingdom on the earth as well as in heaven. Of the truth and impor-

tance of these principles I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Theodore M. Burton, Assistant to the Twelve, has just spoken to us.

Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Council of the Twelve will be our concluding speaker.

Elder Thomas S. Monson

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Today is actually tomorrow in the Tongan Islands, which lie some 2,700 miles southwest of Hawaii. The Tongan capital, Nuku'alofa, is situated 20 minutes east of the International Date Line, thereby giving Tonga the title "the place where time begins." Tongans take delight in the thought that of all the people whom God has created and placed over the expanse of this marvelous world, they are the first to greet the new day, the first to be upon their knees in morning prayer to thank a loving Heavenly Father for his abundant blessings.

The Friendly Islands

Captain James Cook, one of the early explorers of the Pacific, was greatly impressed with the friendliness of these native people. On his charts he designated Tonga as the Friendly Islands. His designation could not have been more descriptive. Tongans are good-humored, polite, outgoing, and, above all, friendly.

Perhaps the Friendly Islands didn't quite live up to their name in the estimation of those first Mormon missionaries who arrived on the island of Tongatabu July 15, 1891. A full year was to transpire before a frame meetinghouse could be erected, a humble and modest school opened, and the first new member baptized. Frustration followed frustration until progress halted. After a 20-year lull, the work was recommenced with the establishment of the Tongan Mission.

Early missionaries

Once again, men of faith, called of

God, left behind home and family and sailed for Tonga. Success came more readily, but not without exacting a price. Typhoid fever took its toll. Today, six well-kept graves mark the resting place of those who were willing to give all in the cause of truth. The words of the Lord provide a fitting epitaph to their lives and to the service of these early missionaries: "Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great." (D&C 64:33.)

From that small frame school has proceeded the Liahona College and a Church-administered school system, which blesses the lives of the choice youth of the Friendly Islands. Teachers, both Tongan and American, with a common bond of faith, provide not only training for the mind, but also preparation for life.

Well could they say:

"We are building in sorrow or joy
A temple the world may not see;
Which time cannot mar nor destroy—
We build for eternity."

(N. B. Sargent,
"Building for Eternity.")

Classroom lesson

On a recent visit to Tonga, I witnessed such a building project. Entering a typical classroom, I noticed the rapt attention that the children gave their native instructor. His textbook and theirs lay closed upon the desks. In his hand he held a strange-appearing lure fashioned from a round stone and