

ELDER SPENCER W. KIMBALL

Of the Council of the Twelve

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, I hope that all of you were as uplifted as I was this morning by the inspired messages of our Prophet and the other brethren.

This is Easter time, when the minds of many people are centered upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and may we speak again of his glorious resurrection. I join my testimony with that of these fine singers in the theme "I know that my Redeemer lives."

The paths that Jesus walked

One Christmas time some years ago, we walked the paths that Jesus walked. We spent some precious hours in what is said to be the Garden of Gethsemane and tried to imagine the sufferings through which he moved in anticipation of his crucifixion and resurrection. We were near the places where he prayed, where he was taken prisoner, where he was tried and condemned.

Outside the city walls, we climbed the caliche hill, pockmarked with little caves, making the rounded end look like a skull, and we were told that this was Golgotha, the place where he was crucified. We zigzagged down the backside of the hill around to the sheer cliff-side of it and entered the small window-size aperture into a rough-hewn cave in which it is said the body had lain.

Some hours we spent in the little garden outside this tomb and absorbed the gospel story of his burial and of his resurrection, which here had taken place. We read thoughtfully and prayerfully of the coming of the women to the sepulchre, the angel of the Lord rolling away the stone, and the discomfiture of the recreant keepers.

"He . . . is risen"

We could almost imagine we saw the two angels in shining garments who spoke to Mary, saying, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

"He is not here, but is risen. . . ."

The Lord had predicted: ". . . The

Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." (Luke 24:5-7.)

We remembered the dialogue between Mary, the angels, and the Lord: ". . . Woman, why weepst thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

She turned and "saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepst thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

"Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

"Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." (John 20:13-17.)

The Mount of Olives

We then walked laboriously up the rather steep Mount of Olives, possibly the approximate path he walked, a prelude to his ascension after having spent 40 days after resurrection on the earth and having, by many infallible proofs, brought sureness to the hundreds of people who had come now to realize his resurrection was real.

And now he was on the top of the Mount of Olives and was saying to these greatly concerned and loved men, ". . . ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8.)

As we sat at the trunk of an ancient olive tree there and read these scriptures, we could easily imagine the Lord standing near this spot in the group of worried, loving, wondering men; and then the fog rolled in, the cloud settled down over the top of the hill, and he was gone. Then we could almost hear

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the angels in white apparel saying:

"... Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11.)

And now we consulted Paul's writings to the Ephesians:

"Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive. . . .

"He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." (Eph. 4:8, 10.)

Significance of Easter

Sometimes our celebrations of notable occurrences seem to take on earthly color, and we do not fully realize the significance of the reason for the celebration. This is true of Easter, when too often we celebrate the holiday rather than the deep significance of the resurrection of the Lord. They must be unhappy indeed who ignore the godship of Christ, the sonship of the Master. We feel sorry indeed for those who call the supreme miracle of the resurrection "but a subjective experience of the disciples rather than an actual historical event."

We know truly that all this is real. Christ spoke of himself to Nicodemus:

"... We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness." (John 3:11.)

And then we remember that Peter testified:

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36.)

"But ye denied the Holy One and the Just. . . .

"And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses." (Acts 3:14-15.)

Boldly, Peter and John stood before the council and said again:

"Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man [the

former lame man] stand here before you whole. . . .

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:10, 12.)

When the council chastised the two apostles and commanded them not to speak or teach such things in the name of Jesus, they answered and said: "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 4:19-20.)

"And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all." (Acts 4:33.)

Witness of Peter

We also know the resurrection is real. The living Peter said to the council of persecutors:

"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on the tree. . . .

"And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." (Acts 5:30, 32.)

We stand in awe before the great Peter, who had so completely received his total assurances and who had so graciously donned the robe of leadership and the mantle of authority and the courage of the inspired and assured. What strength he had come to have as he led the saints and faced the world with all its persecutors, unbelievers, and difficulties. And, as he rehearsed over and over his absolute knowledge, we glory in his stamina as he faced mobs and prelates, officials who could take his life, and as he boldly proclaimed the resurrected Lord, the Prince of Peace, the Holy One and the Just, the Prince of Life, the Prince and Savior. Peter certainly now was sure, impregnable, never to falter. We should gain much sureness by his certainty.

It is significant to read the words and the testimony of Stephen, a holy martyr, who gave his life for his faith.

Stephen "looked up steadfastly into

heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

"And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." (Acts 7:55-56.)

Stephen was a martyr and will inherit eternal life. His testimony reveals that Christ was not dead, but was still living, and was in an exalted, glorified condition with his Father.

Paul's testimony

The testimony of Paul seems most conclusive. He heard the voice of the risen Christ:

"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And to be sure of identity, Saul said, "Who art thou, Lord?" and received the assurance, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." (Acts 9:4-5.)

And now that same Paul, who had recovered his strength, who had been administered to by the priesthood, who had received his lost eyesight, went about in the synagogues confounding the Jews in Damascus, proving "that this is very Christ." (Acts 9:22.)

And later, Paul came to the apostles in Jerusalem, and Barnabas, speaking for Paul, "declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus." (Acts 9:27.)

Then Paul continues:

"And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre.

"But God raised him from the dead:

"And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. . . .

"God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again. . . .

"And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption. . . ." (Acts 13:29-31, 33-34.)

Testimony on Mars Hill

Paul's testimony on Mars hill in Athens was a significant one. The Greeks accepted any and all gods that were proposed. They had inscribed one altar "To the Unknown God," and Paul used this text to tell them that with all their gods of wood and stone they did not know the real "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

". . . seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

". . . and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation. . . .

". . . he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17:24-26, 31.)

Paul told again of his own conversion and bore his testimony and said he heard the voice of Christ saying, "I am Jesus of Nazareth," and he was promised by Ananias: "For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard." (Acts 22:8, 15.)

And then came his pertinent question to King Agrippa: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26:8.)

And again Paul bore witness:

"Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?"

". . . for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." (1 Cor. 9:1-2.)

The risen Lord "was seen of above five hundred brethren at once. . . .

"After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

"And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." (1 Cor. 15:6-8.)

Then Paul launches into the beautiful treatise on the resurrection of the dead, as he spoke to the Corinthians.

I have a great admiration and affection for our brother Paul, our fellow apostle. He was so dedicated, so humble, so straightforward. He was so eager, so interested, so consecrated. He must have been personable in spite of

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his problems, for the people hung onto him with great affection when he was about to leave them.

I love Paul, for he spoke the truth. He leveled with people. He was interested in them. I love Paul for his steadfastness, even unto death and martyrdom. I am always fascinated with his recounting of the perils through which he passed to teach the gospel to member and nonmember.

Testimony of Eyewitnesses

Perhaps one of the last of Peter's testimonies was borne to all the people, both those who had been converted to the gospel and those who would in the future be influenced by his statement, throughout all time a memorial to be remembered.

As this great prophet faced his death and knew that it would not be long until he would discard this body tabernacle and pass into the other world, he determined to write his testimony message so that coming generations might all have his witness. It has been read and heard by countless millions. He said:

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

"For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

"And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." (2 Pet. 1:16-18.)

Witness of Joseph Smith

We are lifted by the witness of the modern prophet, Joseph Smith, when he reassures the people of the resurrection. Elder George A. Smith quotes the last public address of Joseph Smith in June 1844, only days before his cruel assassination:

"... I am ready to be offered a sacrifice for this people; for what can our enemies do? Only kill the body and their power is then at an end. Stand firm my friends. Never flinch.

Do not seek to save your lives, for he that is afraid to die for the truth will lose eternal life. Hold out to the end; and we shall be resurrected and become like Gods, and reign in celestial kingdoms, principalities and eternal dominions. . . ."

Sureness of resurrection

The sureness of the divine resurrection is believed by numerous people in the Christian world. Victor Hugo wrote:

"I feel in myself the future life. The nearer I approach the end, the plainer I hear around me the immortal symphonies of the worlds which invite me. When I go down to the grave I can say like many others: 'I have finished my day's work.' But I cannot say, 'I have finished my life.' My day's work will begin in the next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley, it is a thoroughfare. It closes on the twilight. It opens on the dawn."

And some unknown writer has expressed in verse this natural feeling of and unexplainable longing for immortality.

"Else when this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
This longing for immortality,
Or whence this secret dread, and inward horror
Of falling into naught? Why shrinks the soul
Back on herself, and startles at destruction?
'Tis the divinity that stirs within us;
'Tis heaven itself, that points out an hereafter
And intimates eternity to man."

Question and answer of Job

The question asked by Job has been asked by millions who have stood at the open bier of a loved one: "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14.)

And the question has been answered acceptably to numerous of them as a great, sweet peace settles down upon them like the dews of heaven. And innumerable times hearts that were weary in agonizing suffering have felt

the kiss of that peace which knows not understanding.

And when a deep tranquility of soul has brought a new warm assurance to minds that were troubled and hearts that were torn, those numerous could repeat with beloved Job:

"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

"And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

"Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold. . . ." (Job 19:25-27.)

Job had expressed the wish that his testimony could be printed in books and cut into stone for the generations following him to read. His wish was granted, for peace has come into many souls as they have read his strong testimony.

Vision of John

And in conclusion, let me read the vision of John the Revelator:

"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.

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." (Rev. 20:12-13.)

And as the living, verdant spring follows the dismal, death-like winter, all nature proclaims the divinity of the risen Lord, that he was Creator, that he is the Savior of the world, that he is the very Son of God.

And this I testify, also, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Joseph Fielding Smith

We have just listened to Elder Spencer W. Kimball of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Alma Sonne, Assistant to the Twelve, will now address us. He will be followed by Elder Victor L. Brown, second counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

ELDER ALMA SONNE

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

Someone has said, "The character of Jesus is a picture that stands by itself." There is no one with whom he can be compared. He said and did the right thing at the right time and in the right way. He made no mistakes in his teachings. He was great in action and in moral excellence. His Sermon on the Mount will live forever, for it is founded on truth. His message to the world is the gospel of salvation.

Leadership of Jesus Christ

His life had been an open book, his public ministry was to the rich and the poor, his miracles were performed before eyewitnesses, and his testimony had been heard throughout Galilee and Judea. He was the Messiah about

whom the prophets had spoken, but he was rejected by his own. He is still rejected, even by many of those who claim to be his followers.

The true Christian Church accepts without reservation the leadership of Jesus Christ. Many things have been said and written about him. His memory is everywhere, and his words are quoted by believers and unbelievers. He cannot and will not be expelled from the earth. He made this clear during his ministry among the Jews in the meridian of time.

The Latter-day Saints believe in the divine mission of the Savior. The very first principle of the restored gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the foundation of true worship. Without him there could be no gospel of