

Sunday, April 5

Second Day

The Tabernacle Choir then sang the number, "Lovely Appear."

The opening prayer was offered by Elder Glen L. Rudd, former president of the Florida Mission.

Petersen of the Council of the Twelve will address us.

The Tabernacle Choir sang "Ye Now Are Sorrowful." Olga Gardner was soloist.

President Joseph Fielding Smith

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Jay E. Welch, will now sing, "Ye Now Are Sorrowful," with Olga Gardner as soloist.

After the singing, Elder Mark E.

President Smith

Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Council of the Twelve will be our first speaker this afternoon. He will be followed by Elder A. Theodore Tuttle of the First Council of Seventy.

Elder Mark E. Petersen *Of the Council of the Twelve*

● It is a great privilege to worship with you here, my brothers and sisters and friends, on this the Lord's Sabbath day.

The conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that we now are holding is the most unusual one in 19 years.

Change in administration

The illustrious administration of our beloved President David O. McKay has now come to a close, marking the greatest period of growth the Church has ever experienced in its 140 years of history.

Now we open a new administration under President Joseph Fielding Smith, also beloved and revered through his many years of devotion to the cause of Christ. He will be sustained formally by the vote of the people tomorrow, as the tenth President of the Church.

The President a prophet

The President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is more than a president. To us he also is chosen to be a prophet of God in the same sense in which Moses, Isaiah, and Ezekiel were called. These ancient prophets were revelators. By current revelation they received up-to-date, divine guidance for the people.

In this same sense we accept the President of our Church. He too is a revelator. Through him modern revelation is made available to help us meet the many serious problems of life.

Most people of today, whether Jewish or Christian, regard it as strange that we make such claims for the President of our church.

"A prophet?" they ask with an inquiring look. "A prophet? And what is a prophet? Can any *modern* man be a prophet? Were not prophets confined to Bible times?"

These indeed are proper questions. They should be asked and they should be answered.

Revelation through prophets

Our best explanation may be given by reviewing what the Bible itself says about prophets. Such servants of God were most important in ancient times. In fact, the whole program of the Lord's dealings with his people centered about them. So well established was this procedure that one of them said, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7.)

The entire pattern of the Bible, as shown in both Old and New Testaments, reflects this important fact.

Whenever God had a people on earth whom he recognized as his own, he provided constant guidance for them, and this guidance was by divine revelation given through living prophets.

How we obtained our Bible

These revelations were compiled, and together with the history of the times, they became scripture. This is how we obtained our Bible. The volume of scripture grew with each new prophet. In this way we obtained the books of Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Malachi, and all the others making up our Old Testament.

It was the same in New Testament times. Here again are sacred writings, those of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the Acts, the Epistles, and the book of Revelation, all originating according to the Lord's pattern, even as in Old Testament times.

But was this actually characteristic of the Christian church? Is it true that there were Christian prophets as there were Old Testament prophets?

The apostle Paul taught that Jesus placed in his church both Christian apostles and Christian prophets for the guidance of the members and for the work of the ministry.

Where are prophets today?

But where are the Christian prophets today? Has God altered his pattern? Has the Almighty changed? Or is he still the same yesterday, today, and forever? And if he does not change, can we say that his procedures change?

Remembering that his pattern is the same, we of today should ponder carefully the sacred words given so long ago and ask ourselves why they should not apply today. Recall those words if you will:

"Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7.)

Christian reformers

Some of the great Christian reformers recognized this principle. They knew that God dealt with his people through prophets in ancient times and acknowl-

edged their own lack of divine guidance.

Martin Luther, for example, said that the spiritual powers of early Christianity had been completely destroyed or lost and that Christianity as it was given by the Savior was no longer on the earth.

John Wesley taught that revelation and other spiritual gifts ceased to exist from what he called that "fatal period when Constantine called himself a Christian."

Roger Williams was equally outspoken and said:

"There is no person on earth qualified to administer any Church ordinances; nor can there be until new apostles are sent by the great head of the Church, for whose coming I am seeking."

Thomas Jefferson, though not a cleric in the usual sense, was a great student of Christianity. Even he acknowledged the loss of the original gospel and said that he looked forward to "the prospect of a restoration of primitive Christianity."

Restoration of gospel

Many other thoughtful students of scripture have reached the same conclusion. They have sensed an absence of revelations and other spiritual gifts known so well to ancient Christianity. They also look forward to a restoration of those gifts.

But what encouraged them to believe there would be such a restoration? Was it foretold in Holy Writ?

The Bible teaches that Christ will come again and says that a great new revelation from God is to precede that event, even a restoration of the original gospel, which then is to be preached to the entire modern world.

That new revelation from God would include a modern visitation of angels, the Bible says, a thing regarded as something very strange indeed by most people of today. Yet it is God's way, not man's, that should concern us.

But to whom is this new revelation to come? Will it be given to those who do not believe in modern prophets and revelation and who deny the modern visitation of angels? Would it

come to people so unbelieving and so sophisticated that they would refuse to accept the principle of divine intervention?

God raised up prophets

In the past, when there were no prophets to receive his word, God raised up new ones to bring about his purposes.

By the time the Lord was ready to bring Israel out of Egypt, the people had been without prophets for 400 years and had turned away from the truth. Therefore, when God prepared to bring them back to the holy land, it became necessary for him to raise up a new prophet in the person of Moses, for none of the Israelitish leaders of that day could qualify.

When a forerunner was to be chosen for the mortal ministry of Christ, God did not choose him from among the members of the Sanhedrin. They were unbelieving also and therefore not worthy to receive new revelation. Therefore, he raised up John the Baptist, a new prophet, who could prepare the way for the Lord.

Joseph Smith a new prophet

In our day, when the predicted new revelation was to come as forecast in the scripture, again there was no prophet on the earth to receive it. No one believed in modern prophets. So what could God do? He raised up a new prophet in the person of Joseph Smith, who received the great new revelation. As part of it, he was visited by holy angels, as the Bible foretold. And why did angels come to Joseph Smith? Certainly not to satisfy his curiosity! Those angels came to him to ordain him and confer upon him divine authority and thereby qualify him to serve. In this way the restoration of the gospel was accomplished.

Legal successors

But this was more than a century ago, and Joseph Smith has passed to the great beyond. Others have taken his place. Each of his legal successors, however, was likewise appointed by the Lord as a prophet, a seer, and a revealer to carry on the work.

Joseph Fielding Smith, who is our

President today, and who will be formally sustained during this conference, is likewise a divinely appointed prophet of Almighty God, and we so sustain him.

Mouthpiece for God

When the Lord reestablished this ancient pattern in our day, he gave a commandment to the members of the Church with respect to their President. Said he: ". . . thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me.

"For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith." (D&C 21:4-5.)

In other words, the modern prophet became a mouthpiece for God, even as was Moses.

And then the Lord added one more thing. He said that if any receive his word with a doubtful heart and keepeth it with slothfulness, they shall have no reward. But to those who gladly follow the teachings of the modern prophet, the Almighty said:

". . . his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.

"For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disburse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name's glory." (D&C 21:5-6.)

Continuation of pattern

This is why we Latter-day Saints have prophets. And this is why we sustain Joseph Fielding Smith as a prophet and a seer to our people, which we do joyfully and with all our hearts.

This procedure should not seem strange to those who know the scriptures. It is merely a reestablishment and a continuation of the unchanged but long-forgotten Bible pattern.

And so we say:

"Come, listen to a prophet's voice
And hear the word of God,
And in the way of truth rejoice,
And sing for joy aloud."

—Hymns, No. 46

A solemn reality

What we say here is no fantasy. It is stern and solemn reality. The heavens have been reopened. God once again converses with man.

As Moses saw God and talked with him face to face, so Joseph Smith saw God and talked with him face to face.

As Isaiah guided his people under the light of heaven, so David O. McKay guided his people under the light of heaven. As Peter, James, and John directed the work of the early Christian church, doing so as Christian prophets and Christian apostles, so Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, and Nathan Eldon Tanner direct the work of The restored Church of Jesus Christ, doing it also as Christian prophets and Christian apostles.

It is all a great reality. The gospel has been restored in our day, and it is now offered freely and without price to all mankind; and it is given through the instrumentality of prophets of God, prophets who have received the revelation of God and who walk under his guidance and inspiration.

Invitation to partake

We invite all men to partake of this great gospel. We declare it to be God's truth. We realize what Paul said about preaching false doctrine, and we declare our message in all soberness. What we say is true.

God has spoken again from the heavens. He has raised up new prophets in the earth, and we meet together here in the presence of his latest chosen prophet, seer, and revelator. May we follow his direction and sustain him with our hearts and our hands, I earnestly pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

President Joseph Fielding Smith

We have just listened to Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder A. Theodore Tuttle of the First Council of Seventy will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Bishop Robert L. Simpson, first counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

Elder A. Theodore Tuttle

Of the First Council of the Seventy

● Brothers and sisters: President Lee has said we don't need more prophets to speak—we need more ears to listen.

We are about ready to listen, aren't we? I think we have come to this conference a little more attentive. Isn't it interesting what a difference even six months can make in our willingness to listen. Our situation is somewhat similar to that in the Book of Mormon, when the people had reached a state of "awful wickedness." Nephi then records:

"Now this great iniquity had come upon the Nephites, *in the space of not many years. . . .*" (He. 7:6. Italics added.)

Lord's word about our day

With the challenges we face today, it ought to be very comforting to read

again what the Lord said to Enoch about our day.

"And the Lord said unto Enoch: As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance. . . .

". . . but before that day . . . the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but my people will I preserve." (Moses 7:60-61.)

Likewise, in Section 38, after warning the Saints of tumultuous days, the Lord said:

". . . but if ye are prepared ye shall not fear." (D&C 38:30.)

In the world there will be no peace. Among faithful Latter-day Saints things will be better. The spirit of fear is not of God. Let us turn to the