

Elder LeGrand Richards

Of the Council of the Twelve

● Brothers and sisters, we are about to come to the end of a most inspirational and historic conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; historic because today we have voted to sustain the man whom God has chosen to stand at the head of his work here upon this earth under the direction of his Son Jesus Christ, because this church, as Paul of old said, is built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, with Christ our Lord as the chief cornerstone. (See Eph. 2:20.) I am sure that those of us who know President Joseph Fielding Smith and the men whom he has selected to be his counselors feel grateful to the Lord for them. We feel secure in our hearts to know that this work will continue to roll forth in the earth, building upon the foundation that has been laid by their predecessors, until it shall become as a great mountain and fill the whole earth.

Eulogy to Joseph Smith

During this conference, eulogy and compliments have been paid to the Prophet Joseph Smith and his successors. I think of what the Prophet Lehi said to his son Joseph in the wilderness—that the Lord promised Joseph who was sold into Egypt that in the latter days he would raise up from his loins a prophet whose name would be Joseph, and that his father's name would be Joseph. (See 2 Ne. 3.) He said he would bring forth his word. He brought us the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, and many other writings. As far as the records indicate, there has never been a prophet upon the face of the earth who has given as much revealed truth as we have obtained through this prophet whom God raised up in our day. And he said he would not only bring forth his word but would also bring men to a conviction of his word that had already gone forth among them.

Now when you talk to men as I

have in my missionary work, who have been taught for years, some even in the ministry, you find that you can talk to them for hours and they have no questions to ask. You tell them things they have never heard of, and prove these things to them out of their own scriptures. That I can tell you from my own experience. One man was brought into the Church who had been a minister for 30 years, and he sat in my office and said, "Brother Richards, when I think of how little I had to offer my people as a minister of the gospel compared with what I now have in the fullness of the gospel as it has been restored, I want to go back and tell all my friends what I have found. Now," he said, "they won't listen to me."

Endowed with authority

The Lord said in his promise to Joseph regarding this prophet of our day that he shall bring men unto salvation. Why? Because he would be endowed with that same authority that Jesus gave to his twelve when he said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you. . . ." (John 15:16.) ". . . and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." (Matt. 16:19.) Without that authority, there can be no Church of Jesus Christ upon the earth that he will recognize.

The Lord adds in that promise concerning the Prophet Joseph, "And I will make him great in mine eyes." (2 Ne. 3:8.) Whatever the world may think of this prophet of this dispensation, there is the promise and the statement of the Lord that he will be great in his eyes. The Lord had him in waiting, three thousand years before he was even born, for the great mission to which he was called, just as the Savior was called to his mission—not the same kind of mission but of equal importance in that it was a part of the Lord's great eternal plan for the salvation of his children.

Successors of the prophet

We could refer to each of the successors of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Take Brigham Young, for instance. I think history records no colonizer like Brigham Young. Just look at what we enjoy right here in these valleys of the mountains, this tabernacle, that holy temple. The city itself is part of his work as he led the pioneers to this desert place and built this great commonwealth.

You could consider each of the other prophets who have succeeded him. My father used to bring us boys here, travel 40 miles by team, so that we could become acquainted with the leaders of the Church. I remember as a boy sitting in this tabernacle when Wilford Woodruff gave his last talk (I think it was his last talk before he passed away) when he told how marvelously the Spirit of the Lord had guided and directed him. He was a man who really lived near the Lord. Now you've heard his story of how he was inspired to get up in the middle of the night and move his team that was tied to an oak that had stood on that spot for over a hundred years. Then along came a twister and picked up that oak and threw it right where his team and wagon in which he and his wife were sleeping had been standing. If he hadn't listened to the promptings of the Spirit, this might have cost him his life.

He told about bringing a company of pioneers and Saints from Great Britain. When they landed in New Orleans, he was about to enter a boat, making arrangements, and something seemed to say, "Don't go on that boat, either you or your company." So he thanked the captain and decided to wait. Then he said the boat had no more than sailed up the river when it caught fire and not a soul was saved. He said, "If I hadn't listened to the promptings of the Spirit of the Lord, we wouldn't have had Brother So-and-So and Brother So-and-So," and he began naming men who were in that company.

Now I could go on with the other prophets it has been my privilege to

know. How I loved President Heber J. Grant! He called me to be the Presiding Bishop of the Church. How I loved President Joseph F. Smith, the father of our new President! He was one of the greatest prophets I have ever known. I have heard him speak in this tabernacle and bless the people, and I don't think there was a dry eye here because of the spiritual power that man had. When I had filled two missions and went in his office to report, he took me in his arms and said, "LeGrand, we love you." That paid for all the missionary work I had done up to that time.

President David O. McKay

Then I think of President David O. McKay. For years, everywhere we have gone in the Church, the Saints have said, "Take our love back to President McKay." Even little children would write their messages and ask us to hand them to the President. What a leader he really was!

I was told the story of a businessman who came here from the East a few years ago, and in talking to the secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, he said, "Do you know what I'd rather do than anything else while I'm here?" The secretary said, "What's that?" He said, "I would like to meet that man, David O. McKay, the President of the Mormon Church." "Well," the secretary said, "I think I can arrange it." And he did, and President McKay talked to him for about an hour. As he walked down the front steps of the Church Office Building, he turned to the secretary and said, "If I were asked to name the one man whom I have met in all my life that comes the nearest in approximating my appraisal of the Redeemer of the world, I'd name that man." He was beloved in and out of the Church.

And now, brothers and sisters, we have a man who has come to us from the loins of the holy prophets, who has devoted his life to the Church, and who has probably written more in explanation of the truths of the gospel than any other man since the days of the Prophet Joseph. I am sure that

it was pleasing to the Lord to see how we sustained him here in our vote today.

Why a prophet?

I think the theme that has distinguished this conference in my thinking has been "Why a Prophet?" Why should we have a prophet? And then I think of the passage Brother Petersen quoted yesterday, where the Lord said through the prophet Amos, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7.) What does that mean? It means that no honest person believing in the holy scriptures could look to find God's eternal truth upon the earth without a prophet at its head, because we have no record that he has ever had a church or a movement without a prophet.

Then I think of the words of the Savior as he stood overlooking Jerusalem and said:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

"For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Matt. 23:37-39.)

And when one comes in the name of the Lord, that person can be none other than a prophet of God.

Preparation for second coming

The Savior testified of John, who was sent to prepare the way for his coming in the meridian of time. He said there was no greater prophet born of woman than John the Baptist. Then I think of the words of the Lord to the prophet Malachi, wherein he said:

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple. . . .

"But who may abide the day of his

coming? . . . for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap." (Mal. 3:1-2.)

Obviously that had no reference to his first coming, as he did not come swiftly to his temple, and all men could abide the day of his coming. He didn't come cleansing and purifying as refiner's fire and fullers' soap; but we are told in the holy scriptures that when he shall come in the latter days, the wicked will cry out, "[Let the rocks] fall upon us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne." (See Rev. 6:16.) From my way of thinking, that prophet was the Prophet Joseph Smith, sent to prepare the way for his coming by being the instrument in the hands of the Lord to bring forth his great latter-day work.

Now as I read the scriptures, I just can't comprehend how the marvelous things that the ancient prophets declared that God would accomplish in our day and time could be accomplished without a prophet. The apostle Paul said the Lord had revealed the mystery of his will unto him. (See Eph. 1:9.) That is important. "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth. . . ." (Eph. 1:10.) We are the only church in the world that has a program to complete and fulfill that declaration revealed by the Lord to the apostle Paul, and we couldn't do it except for the prophets whom he has raised up in our day.

Restitution of all things

I think of the time when Peter talked to those who had put to death the Christ, and he told them, "And he [the Lord] shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:20-21.) How could there be a restitution of all things unless there was a prophet to receive what the holy prophets would bring? We testify that that has been fulfilled through the restoration of the gospel.

I think of the words of Malachi when he said:

“. . . I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

“And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” (Mal. 4:5-6.)

What consequences, were it not for the coming of Elijah? And to whom would he come save there was a prophet here at the head of the Lord’s work? We testify that Elijah has come and delivered the keys of his dispensation.

A marvelous work and a wonder

I think of the words of the Lord through Isaiah. He said:

“Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.

“Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.” (Isa. 29:13-14.)

I think this church is the marvelous work and a wonder that Isaiah saw, and how could it be unless there was a prophet unto whom the Lord could reveal his will? “Surely,” as Amos said, “the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.” (Amos 3:7.)

I think of the experience when Daniel was called to interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s dream; you remember how Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten the dream, and he called in the soothsayers and the wise men and the astrologers, and none of them could give him the dream. He sent for the man Daniel. And Daniel came and he said, “. . . there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these.” (Dan. 2:28.)

Then he told them about the rise and fall of the kingdoms of this world until the latter days, when the God of heaven would set up a kingdom that should never be destroyed nor given to another people, but instead it would be like a stone cut out of the mountain without hands and would roll forth until it would become as a great mountain and fill the whole earth.

I ask you—why a prophet? How could the God of heaven set up a work like that without a prophet through whom he could work and reveal his mind and will?

Kingdom of God

Incidentally, when I was president of the Southern States Mission, one of our missionaries down in Florida preached on that particular passage of scripture one night. At the close of the meeting I stood at the door, and a man came up and introduced himself as a minister of the gospel. He said, “You don’t expect us to believe that the Mormon church is that kingdom, do you?” And I said, “Yes, sir. Why not?” He said, “It couldn’t be.” I said, “Why couldn’t it?” “Well,” he said, “we can’t have a kingdom without a king, and we don’t have a king, so we haven’t a kingdom.” “Oh,” I said, “my friend, you didn’t read quite far enough. You just read the seventh chapter of Daniel and you will see where Daniel saw one like the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, and unto him was given the kingdom that all other kingdoms, powers, and dominions under the whole heavens should serve him.” (See Dan. 7:13-14.)

Then I said to this minister, “My friend, tell me, how can the kingdom be given to him when he comes in the clouds of heaven, if there is no kingdom prepared for him? That is what this church is, the preparation, the restitution of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets.” Then I said, “Probably you would like to know what is going to become of that kingdom, and if you will read just a little further in that seventh chapter, you will see where Daniel said, ‘But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom

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for ever.'” (Dan. 7:18.) And as if that were not quite long enough, Daniel adds, “even for ever and ever.”

Help work to roll on

Now the saints of the most high God have been attending this conference, and to you there is the promise that this kingdom will be given to you if you make yourselves worthy of it. Therefore, I say to you that there is no other thing you can do in this world that will bring you greater eternal happiness than to help to roll this majestic work on, this marvelous work and a wonder, until it shall fill the whole earth.

Now I could go on for an hour telling you other things that the God of heaven has decreed that he would do in our day, and he couldn't do them without a prophet of God, and so I stand here to bear you my witness that this church is led and has been led by living prophets. I sustain with all my heart our new prophet, seer, and revelator, and his counselors; I pray God to bless them, and to bless the saints

of Zion the world over, that they may be worthy of their great heritage to be a part of this great latter-day movement, with God at its head and his prophets to direct it. I ask this prayer, and pray God to bless you all, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

President Harold B. Lee

Brother LeGrand Richards has now spoken to us. I can say as did King Agrippa: “Thou almost persuadest all of us, LeGrand.” How proud we are of all the brethren as we listen to their marvelous testimonies and the preaching of the gospel. You leaders of Zion, will you tell your speakers in sacrament meetings to exemplify what you have heard here: Preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let's confine our teachings to the truth of the gospel, and this kingdom will roll on as Brother Richards has prayed it will, and the Lord has promised.

Now President Smith, if you have any more steam left, we would like your closing blessing upon us today.

President Joseph Fielding Smith

● Brethren and sisters, I think this has been a wonderful day, and we have heard a great deal that is of profit to us if we will only treasure it.

We come now to the closing moments of another great general conference of the Church.

Purposes of conference fulfilled

We came together to sustain a new First Presidency and to receive counsel and direction from the Lord through his servants the prophets.

We assembled to partake of the good things of the Spirit, to feel that influence which comes only from the Lord, and to be built up in faith and in testimony.

We came to worship the Lord, to affirm our love for him and our devotion to his cause, and we came desiring in our hearts to keep the commandment which says: “Thou shalt

love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him.” (D&C 59:5.)

I feel that the purposes of the conference have been fulfilled. We are now ready to go our several ways with a renewed dedication to the upbuilding of our Father's work, and with a determination to use our strength and influence to bless all his children.

Let us now heed the counsel of him who said: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 5:16.)

Blessing and assurance

I leave my blessing with you and my assurance that God is with his people, and that the work in which we are engaged shall triumph and roll