

Elder LeGrand Richards

Of the Council of the Twelve

● Brothers and sisters, it is wonderful to be gathered here with you again in one of these great conferences of our church. Led by the Tabernacle Choir, we have just sung a song that finds an echo in my heart: "God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform."

A day of wonders

Having done as much missionary work as I have, I have always considered the great wonders the Lord has done in our day in connection with the restoration of his gospel to the earth in this dispensation. This is a day of wonders, a day when so many things are happening in the world. If I were to ask what you consider the most wonderful thing that has happened in this world in the last 150 years, I imagine that most people would say the landing of the astronauts on the moon. That truly was a miracle, and how it happened only those who worked it out can tell you.

Then I think of how we were able to sit in our homes and watch on television as those men got down from the capsule to walk on that land without the power of gravity to pull them back. Then I think of what has been the result. (Now I am admitting to you that I don't know enough about science to know how much good that great achievement will be to me or my family.)

Joseph Smith's first vision

Then I think of another event that transpired within the last 150 years that from my way of appraisal far exceeds that in its majesty and magnitude and in its good for humanity, and for me and my family and for all other people in this world who really love the Lord and want to serve him. That was when the boy Joseph Smith went out in the woods to pray, having read the words of the apostle James: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God,

that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." (Jas. 1:5.) Then he went out into the woods to pray, believing in that promise, and a pillar of light descended from heaven, as it did to Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus, and in the midst of that pillar of light were God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.

When that boy asked which of all the churches he should join, the Father, pointing to the Son, said: "*This is My Beloved Son, Hear Him!*" (See Joseph Smith 2:17.) The answer came that he was to join none of them, for they all taught for doctrines the precepts of men, and then he was told of the work that was about to come forth.

If that story is true, and I know that it is, is there anything like it in all this world? For when the heavens opened, heavenly messengers appeared, the Father and the Son who created this earth; we are told in the holy scriptures that God created the earth by the power of his Only Begotten, and could anything that has happened in this world in the last 150 years compare with the visit of the Father and the Son to this earth? We bear solemn testimony, all of us gathered here in this conference this day, and millions throughout the earth who have put this message to the test, that this is the truth. As Jesus said to Nicodemus: "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness." (John 3:11.) And so we are testifying to all the world that this glorious event transpired.

Ascension of Jesus

After Jesus had spent some forty days with his disciples and ascended to heaven in the presence of 500 of the brethren, as they stood gazing into heaven, two men in white apparel stood by their side and said: "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.) Why then should it be so difficult to believe that he would appear when two angels stood there to say that he would come again? And we are looking forward to his coming. When I think of all of the things the prophets have foretold that should precede his second coming, then I say truly that God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform.

Statement in Malachi

I like the statement in the third chapter of Malachi, where the Lord, speaking through the prophet Malachi, 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 fuller's soap." (Malachi 3:1-2.)

Now that obviously had no reference to his first coming, because he didn't come suddenly to his temple. All men were able to abide the day of his coming. He did not come cleansing and purifying as refiner's fire and fuller's soap, but we are told that when he shall come in the latter days the wicked shall cry out to the rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." (Rev. 6:16.) And so when God sends a messenger to prepare the way before him, that messenger could be none other than a prophet.

Prophet of this dispensation

You remember what Jesus said of John the Baptist, who was sent to prepare the way for his coming in the meridian of time. He said that there was no greater prophet in Israel than John the Baptist. And so we bear solemn testimony to the world that this prophet whom God raised up in this dispensation was the Prophet Joseph Smith. He was the messenger that was sent to prepare the way for

these wonderful things that the Lord promised to send to this world to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord.

He was the prophet of this dispensation whom, according to our scriptures, the Lord had in waiting over 3,000 years after he declared his coming, waiting for his day and time just as did the prophets of old, such as Jeremiah, when he was called to be a prophet. He could not understand this, and the Lord said, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." (Jer. 1:5.) The prophet of this dispensation was ordained to be a prophet unto the nations before he ever came here, and we have the word of the Lord that he should be great in his eyes. (See 2 Ne. 3:8.)

Times of restitution

Then I think of the statement of Peter following the day of Pentecost, when he talked to those who put to death the Christ, and he told them that the heavens would receive the Christ "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 3:21.) Is it difficult to believe this prophecy of Peter's that there should be a restitution of all things spoken by the mouths of all the holy prophets since the world began? No other church in this world, as far as I know, claims such a restitution, and that includes the visit of many holy prophets of the dispensations past.

The Book of Mormon

Following the coming of the Father and the Son to the Prophet Joseph, a few years later Moroni, a prophet who had lived here upon this earth in the land of America 400 years after the Christ, came back to tell the prophet about the former inhabitants of this land and the record that had been prepared, which is the Book of Mormon.

Brother [Marion G.] Romney gave

us an inspiring talk yesterday about the teachings of that book. It was preserved for the convincing of the Jew and the Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the very eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations. It was preserved by the hand of Almighty God; and it was written by the command of the Lord to Ezekiel the prophet that two records should be kept, one of Judah and his followers, the House of Israel, and one of Joseph and his followers. The Lord promised he would take the record of Joseph that was in the hands of Ephraim and put it with the record of Judah and make them one in his hands. (See Ezek. 37:16-17.) Can't we believe that God would do that which he said he would do? If the Book of Mormon isn't that record, where is it?

Blessings of Joseph

In order to fully appreciate what that book is, we need to go back a little further to the promises made to the twelve sons of Jacob, and Joseph's promise, if you will read it, far exceeds that of his other brethren. He was promised through Jacob many blessings. "The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. . . ." (Gen. 49:26.)

In describing the new land that should be given to Joseph, who would be separated from his brethren, Moses used the word "precious" five times in just four verses as recorded in the Bible describing that new land. (See Deut. 33:13-16.) That new land was none other than this land of America. The Lord had it preserved, waiting for the day of the restoration of the gospel in this latter day.

What does the world know about that record of Joseph? And why should they hesitate to accept it? And with its acceptance, even the Jewish people have no occasion to question who their Messiah is because that record so definitely tells of the signs of the birth of the Savior of the world, of his crucifixion, and then of his visit to this land of America when he visited his people,

as Brother Romney told us yesterday.

It has been said that if that book had been found by a man plowing in his field, it would have been considered the greatest event of the nineteenth century. We have testimonies from many who are not members of the Church. The book contains a promise that if we would read it, the Lord would manifest the truth of it unto us by the power of the Holy Ghost. (See Moro. 10:4.)

Testimony of university dean

Some years ago Brother Nicholas G. Smith, speaking from this pulpit, told us of an experience he had while presiding over the California Mission. The dean of religion at the University of Southern California asked him for a copy of the Book of Mormon, and Brother Smith gave him one that had been marked by the missionaries, with the important passages underlined; then the dean invited Brother Smith and the missionaries to attend his meeting. He took that Book of Mormon and he would read passage after passage to his congregation and would say: "This isn't a dead book, it's a live book." He said, "We have here a volume of scripture that has been in our midst for a hundred years, and we haven't known anything about it." And then he would say to his congregation: "Aren't these beautiful teachings? Why can't we fellowship a people who believe in such beautiful things as I have been reading to you here today?" Well, that is just another testimony of the divinity of this work, but the Lord preserved it to fulfill his promises to Joseph in this land, choice above all other lands.

"Mountain of the Lord's house"

There isn't time today to go into these other wonderful things that the Lord has created in a way that is mysterious to the world. You just take this temple standing here on this block. Isaiah and Micah were both permitted to look down through the stream of time (3,000 years) to the latter days, and they named the latter days when the mountain of the Lord's house would be established in the top of the mountains and all na-

tions would flow unto it; and they would say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. . . ." (See Isa. 2:2-3.) As far as I know there is no building in the history of this world that has gathered people from all nations like this temple, and many of you who are here today are no doubt descendants of some of those who have been gathered to this land.

Temples in Europe

When I was doing missionary work over in Holland, I had a very earnest investigator, a businessman. He said, "I will never join your church." I said, "Why?" He said, "I don't want to go to America." I said, "Good for you." I then added, "You just stay right here and help strengthen these branches." He had been a member of the Church only a few months when he came rushing into my office one day and said, "Brother Richards, I have a chance to sell my business." I said, "What do you want to sell your business for?" "Oh, I want to go to Zion," he said. I wish you could see the accounts we had on the mission books, when I was secretary of the mission, of the good Dutch people saving their nickels and their dimes to come here before we had any temples in Europe.

I heard President Joseph F. Smith say in Rotterdam in 1906 that the day would come when temples of the Lord would dot that whole land of Europe, and I have lived long enough to see two of them built. Well, that is just another of these wonders that are mysterious to the world that the Lord has given us. If we would take time to study the prophecies of the gathering, we would know that the Lord kept this land away from the eyes of the world to make it the gathering place of his people.

Coming of Elijah

Brothers and sisters, we have so much to be grateful for. Yesterday Brother Burton talked to us about the coming of Elijah the prophet. Just

think of that promise of Malachi, that before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, the Lord said he would send Elijah the prophet, "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.) How could anybody believe the holy scriptures and not pray for the day to come when Elijah would come? And then we bear solemn witness to the world that he has come.

I was in Israel a year ago last July, and we went into three of the synagogues on a tour, and in one of them there was hanging on the wall an arm chair. I asked the rabbi what it was there for. He said, "So we could let it down for Elijah to sit in when he comes." And of course I couldn't tell him that Elijah had already been, and that his coming has given us this assurance that has been mentioned in this conference of the eternal duration of the marriage covenant. Not only that, but God has also prepared a thousand years under the leadership of Jesus until every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ, which means that this message has got to go into the eternal worlds.

Solemn witness

I bear you my solemn witness that this is God's work, and I know it in every fiber of my being, and I know that it is what Isaiah saw when he said: "Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precepts 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.)

That is the message we have to all the world, and I bear you my witness that there isn't an honest man or an honest woman in this world who really

loves the Lord who wouldn't join this church if they would take time to find out what it really is. I bear you that witness and pray God to bless you all, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

The Tabernacle Choir sang the following two numbers: "Battle Hymn of the Republic," and "With a Voice of Singing."

President Harold B. Lee

The Tabernacle Choir has sung the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," and I would not be surprised to see many

● I should like to speak out across the land to the youth who are the future of the Church and the hope of the nations.

Conversation with young man

I found my theme in a conversation with a young man in a South American airport, where we were both delayed by late planes. His hair was long and his face bearded, his glasses large and round. Sandals were on his feet, and his clothing such as to give the appearance of total indifference to any generally accepted standard of style.

I did not mind this. He was earnest and evidently sincere. He was educated and thoughtful, a graduate of a great North American university. Without employment and sustained by his father, he was traveling through South America.

What was he after in life? I asked. "Peace—and freedom" was his immediate response. Did he use drugs? Yes, they were one of his means to obtain the peace and freedom he sought. Dis-

with tears in their eyes as they listened.

I said to Elder LeGrand Richards here who has just spoken, as I shook his hand, "Brother Richards, you too are a marvelous work and a wonder."

Following a brief organ interlude, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will then be our concluding speaker.

Elder Alexander Schreiner played an organ interlude.

President Lee

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Elder Gordon B. Hinckley

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cussion of drugs led to discussions of morals. He talked matter-of-factly about the new morality that gave so much more freedom than any previous generation had ever known.

He had learned in our opening introductions that I was a churchman; and he let me know, in something of a condescending way, that the morality of my generation was a joke. Then with earnestness he asked how I could honestly defend personal virtue and moral chastity. I shocked him a little when I declared that his freedom was a delusion, that his peace was a fraud, and that I would tell him why.

Our flights were called shortly after that, and we had to separate. Since then I have thought much of our discussion. I would hope that he might be listening somewhere today. He is part of a challenging generation numbered in the millions who, in a search for freedom from moral restraint and peace from submerged conscience, have opened a floodgate of practices that enslave and debauch, and which, if left unchecked, will not only destroy