

### The purpose of riches

What are riches for, then? To be used in doing good. Therefore, let us dedicate our means to the building of the kingdom of God. Let us this day resolve to be honest with the Lord in the payment of our tithes and offerings.

I know that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, and this is far more important than earthly riches.

And I know that the gospel in its fullness has been restored in this dispensation through the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and that there is a living prophet at the head of the Church today, President Joseph

Fielding Smith. This is likewise of more value than any amount of earthly wealth.

However, a testimony alone will not save us. It is the keeping of the commandments of God—living the life of a true Latter-day Saint. It is important, then, to appreciate that the gospel has to be lived in order to be fully realized and its power received.

Therefore, let us dispense the means which the Lord has given us to enrich the lives of others who are less fortunate than we are and to build the kingdom of God, that we may make of our life a good gift to God, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ■

## Elder Mark E. Petersen

*Of the Council of the Twelve*

Three great civilizations have occupied the Western Hemisphere. Two have passed into oblivion.

Those that disappeared died by virtual suicide. They brought about their own extinction as they defiled the land and defied their God by extensive crime, sexual deviation, and other loathsome sins of almost every kind.

### Resemblance in degradation

Now our modern nations have succeeded them in the occupancy of this hemisphere. Much of the corruption which is common among us today resembles in striking detail the degradation that afflicted them.

In most of the Americas, for example, we have an advancing crime rate which is staggering, to say the least, reaching an annual cost to the public or more than 40 billion dollars in the United States alone.

Our moral collapse is appalling, but surprisingly, many attempt to justify it. Within recent weeks one of the highest officials of a leading Chris-

tian denomination publicly announced that he favors premarital relationships between young people, and his speech was carried internationally by the Associated Press.

### Social diseases

Because of promiscuity, the dreaded social diseases have reached the epidemic stage. One health official said that actually they have surpassed epidemic proportions, and he called the condition a plague. These social diseases now affect more people than any communicable disease except the common cold.

In one of our best known western cities health officials estimate that one in every ten persons between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five has a venereal disease. It is almost unbelievable.

The *International Herald Tribune* recently said that easy abortion has now removed the stigma from immorality, making free sex even freer still.

### Our inconsistency

Our inconsistency in the present situation is frightening.

While millions accept promiscuity as a new way of life and excuse adultery even though it wrecks marriages and breaks up homes, at the same time we make it illegal to offer a prayer in some of our public places.

While we teach sex in schools and publicly portray the vilest of filth on the movie screen, we virtually make a criminal of a schoolteacher who would bring a Bible into the classroom or who might ask the students to recite the Lord's Prayer. So far have we lost our sense of values!

Some Americans protest reference to the Almighty in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag, while others would eliminate "In God We Trust" from our coins.

### Tidal wave of corruption

Church attendance in most denominations is falling off at a rapid rate. Bible sales are down 25 percent, and some members of the clergy have lost their faith.

The Almighty provided that we should observe a sacred Sabbath each week. We have flouted this law to his face, and most of us have turned his holy day into one of pleasure or of "business as usual," and yet the Sabbath was given as a symbol of allegiance to our Creator.

How true it is that "first we pity, then endure, then embrace" the repeated and relentless incursions of iniquity.

Are we caught in a tidal wave of atheism and its accompanying corruption?

Are we any better than the civilizations which preceded us here and which were swept away because of iniquity?

### A land of special significance

Those civilizations were taught a stern lesson pertaining to their occupancy of this hemisphere.

They were told that this is a land of special significance to the Almighty and that only those nations which serve God may remain here.

We of today must heed this warning if we ourselves are to survive.

We do not say that sin in other parts of the world is less reprehensible or to be excused in the least degree, for sin is always sin regardless of the philosophies of men and no matter where it appears.

But in this hemisphere a different situation exists. God has dedicated this land to the work of his Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will not tolerate continued desecration of it.

In so reserving this land for his divine purpose, he decreed "that whoso should possess this land of promise, from that time henceforth *and forever*, should serve him, the true and only God, or they should be swept off when the fulness of his wrath should come upon them." (Eth. 2:8. Italics added.)

In plain, blunt words, then, we are told that whatever nations occupy this land must serve God or die!

### Warnings of great men

The great men of modern America have given us similar warnings, peculiarly enough.

A generation ago, Roger Babson, at that time one of our leading economists, said: "Only religion can prevent democratic rule from developing into mob rule. A nation can prosper only as its citizens are religious, intelligent, capable of service and eager to render it." And then this great man said, and it is something to which we should give careful attention, "Every great panic we have ever had has been foreshadowed by a general decline in observance of religious principles."

Abraham Lincoln told the people of his day that America "need fear no danger from without. . . . If danger were ever to threaten the United States, it will come from within. 'As

a nation of freemen, we must live through all time, or die by suicide. . . ."

Then the great emancipator added this:

"We have grown in numbers, wealth and power. . . . But we have forgotten God. . . . It behooves us then to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness."

It was George Washington, our first president, who said: ". . . we ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained. . . ." (First inaugural address, April 30, 1789.)

One of the most stern of all warnings came from the great statesman Daniel Webster when he said: "If we and our posterity reject religious instruction and authority, violate the rules of eternal justice, trifle with the injunctions of morality and recklessly destroy the political constitution which holds us together, no one can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us, that shall bury all our glory in profound obscurity."

### Warnings through forces of nature

God has revealed that in the last days he would warn the people through the voice of tempests, earthquakes, and seas heaving themselves beyond their bounds. Do we hear his voice now and recognize it?

When an estimated half million people are stricken in one hurricane in Pakistan, when one hundred thousand are left homeless in a single quake in Chile, and when these two disasters come within a few weeks of each other, can we ignore the warnings which they give?

When two devastating hurricanes wipe out entire communities in Mississippi within a few months of each other, when oft-repeated earthquakes

strike Los Angeles with death and a half-billion-dollar devastation, do we hear in them the voice of God as a fair warning to the rest of us?

Can we relax and feel at ease because we take out insurance against earthquakes, fire, and storm damage?

Can an insurance policy prevent a hurricane or stay an earthquake?

Who can control such awesome forces?

Who is the God of nature?

Who stood in a storm-tossed boat with a group of frightened fishermen and rebuked the storm by simply saying "Peace be still," and the wind abated and there came a great calm?

### Warnings of American prophets

The extinct civilizations of the past now speak to us out of the dust of the ages, giving warning against the same conditions which brought them down to oblivion.

Listen to what they say!

The ancient prophets who lived in America among those destroyed civilizations saw us of today through the eye of revelation. They referred to us as gentiles, and one of these prophets said: ". . . O ye Gentiles, how can ye stand before the power of God, except ye shall repent and turn from your evil ways?"

"Know ye not that ye are in the hands of God? Know ye not that he hath all power, and at his great command the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll?"

"Therefore, repent ye, and humble yourselves before him, lest he shall come out in justice against you. . . ." (Morm. 5:22-24.)

Another ancient American prophet, long since dead and now speaking to us out of the dust, said:

". . . behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God. And it is not until the fulness of iniquity among

the children of the land, that they are swept off.

"And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God—that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fulness come, that ye may not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done." (Eth. 2:10-11.)

An ancient prophet named Mormon, who lived here in America fifteen hundred years ago, said: "Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing.

"And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities. . . ." (Morm. 8:35-36.)

### Word to house of Israel

There are many people on this Western Hemisphere who have in their veins the blood of some of the tribes of Israel. To them this prophet said: "Know ye that ye are of the house of Israel.

"Know ye that ye must come unto repentance, or ye cannot be saved.

"Know ye that ye must come to the knowledge of your fathers, and repent of all your sins and iniquities, and believe in Jesus Christ, that he is the Son of God. . . ." (Morm. 7:2-3, 5.)

And then we have this, also pertaining to us who live today, and coming from another ancient American prophet who speaks out of the dust to us today: ". . . these things doth the Spirit manifest unto me; therefore I write unto you all. And for this cause I write unto you, that ye may know that ye must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, yea, every soul who belongs to the whole

human family of Adam; and ye must stand to be judged of your works, whether they be good or evil;

"And also that ye may believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, which ye shall have among you. . . ." (Morm. 3:20-21.)

### One speaking out of dust

And finally, one of the greatest of all the prophets who lived in ancient America spoke this to you and to me who live today:

"I exhort you to remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust?

"And God shall show unto you, that that which I have written is true.

"And again I would exhort you that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing." (Moro. 10:27, 29-30.)

### Great blessings promised

If the modern nations of the Americas will repent and serve the Lord, great blessings will be theirs, for the prophet has said: ". . . this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ. . . ." (Eth. 2:12.)

How long will the Almighty be patient as we ignore or defy him?

Shall we comfort ourselves by accepting the philosophy which says that there is no God, that the Bible is but a myth, that the Book of Mormon is not true, and that therefore repentance is unnecessary?

We testify to you that God does live, that he is the eternal judge of all mankind, and that each one of us must face the record of our own deeds on his judgment day.

Jesus Christ does live. He is the God of this land. It is his gospel, and only his gospel, which can save us from destruction.

God grant that we may awaken to our plight and change our course while there is yet time, is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ■

### President Harold B. Lee

President Smith has asked me to make an announcement here before we conclude this service.

We have in our audience this afternoon some representatives of the American Society of Civil Engineers: Mr. Samuel S. Baxter of Philadelphia, national president of the American Society of Civil Engineers, and with him we have Mr. Paul Willmore, President of the Utah Section of this Society, and Mr. Clyde D. Gessel, the chairman of the History and Heritage Committee.

On the east end of this Tabernacle they are presenting a plaque designating the Mormon Tabernacle as a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark today at the conclusion of this meeting. There will be a brief ceremony. Those of you who may wish to participate may go there immediately after this session has ended.

President Smith then will make the concluding announcement here.

### President Joseph Fielding Smith

The Sunday morning session will be broadcast by many radio and television stations in the western United States, and by short-wave in English

over Station WNYW to Europe, South America, Central America, Africa, and parts of Asia.

Over 70 radio stations will broadcast conference in Spanish Sunday morning to major cities of Mexico and Central America, and by satellite to countries of South America, together with Spanish programming stations in this country to a potential Latin American audience of 42 million people.

Radio stations in Brazil will broadcast conference in Portuguese, also by means of satellite, to a potential Brazilian audience of 14 million people.

Through special arrangements sessions of this morning and Sunday will be carried from the Tabernacle over direct oceanic cables to a large number of saints assembled in many chapels throughout Great Britain, Germany, France, Holland and Austria on Sunday.

The CBS Radio Network Tabernacle Choir Broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. Those desiring to attend this broadcast must be in their seats no later than 9:15 a. m.

On behalf of all who have listened to the singing during this session of the General Conference, we express appreciation and our sincere thanks to these young students for the beautiful music they have rendered. We are grateful for their presence and for their willingness to come here to add their youthful, exhilarating spirit and influence to this meeting.

Under the direction of Don B. Castleton, with Roy M. Darley at the organ, the chorus will now render, "Beatitudes."

The benediction will then be offered by Elder Parley A. Arave, former president of the Idaho Falls Temple.

The general session of this conference will then be adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.