

this question: Is there a true church? That is how it all began, you know, with a fourteen-year-old boy who went into a grove. Two questions: Which of all the churches is true? and Which should he join? There he experienced a marvelous vision of the Father and the Son, and the dispensation of the fulness of times was ushered in. Subsequently the authority to act for Him was restored and rests yet with this church. We heard in this meeting a prophet of God, Joseph Fielding Smith.

I bear witness that he is a prophet

of God. I have a witness that Jesus is the Christ. He lives. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true and living church upon the face of this earth, of which I bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Harold B. Lee

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church has just addressed us.

We shall now hear from Elder Henry D. Taylor, Assistant to the Twelve.

Elder Henry D. Taylor

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

The prophet Abraham found favor in the sight of the Lord. He was given the assurance that he was a great and noble intelligence before coming to this earth. He learned that the earth was created as a place for the intelligences to dwell after their birth as mortal beings. Here they would be tested and tried to see if they would do all things that the Lord God would command them to do. Earth life would thus become a testing ground.

Man's free agency

It was not intended that the earthly road would be smooth, nor would the path be easy. Satan, the father of lies and deceit, and his evil followers would be permitted to use their wiles and influence to blind men to the truth and try to lead them astray. But man was to be allowed his free agency, the right to choose. It was contemplated that God, through his prophets, would provide guidelines

known as commandments, which, if followed, would bring joy and happiness. However, it would be man's privilege and responsibility to make a choice between good and evil. He himself must make the decisions. This was all part of the gospel plan. Joseph Smith, the Prophet, has given assurance that we were present as spiritual beings at a council when the plan was presented, and we gave it our approval.

This is a glorious time in which to live here upon the earth. The gospel and priesthood have been restored. The Church has been reestablished. While Jesus the Christ is head of the church that bears his name, men whom we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators are giving guidance to us.

Times of testing

As we travel through life upon this earth, there come times when we must stand up and be counted. These are times of testing. Are we on the Lord's

side, keeping his commandments? Do we sustain our leaders and uphold them? Do we stand steadfast and unwavering?

Lyman Wight, known as "The Wild Ram of the Mountains," was one of the early apostles in this dispensation. He was strong-willed, determined, and a man whom few could influence. However, he loved and respected the Prophet Joseph and was obedient to him. After the martyrdom of the Prophet, he said on one occasion, "The only man in the world that can control me is now gone." He disassociated himself from Brigham Young and the other members of the Twelve and led a group to Texas, where he finally fell into obscurity and oblivion, while Brigham Young and the faithful went west and gained in stature and prominence. Lyman Wight was tested and found wanting.

Peter the Rock

Simon, a fisherman, who was to be known later as Simon Peter, or Peter, was introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew, who already had a testimony that Jesus was the Messiah.

When Jesus first beheld Simon he said: "Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas [or Peter], which is by interpretation, A stone, (or the Rock). . . . So from that time, Simon was known as Simon Peter or 'Simon the Rock.'" (David O. McKay, *Ancient Apostles*, Sunday School Course of Study, 1952, p. 6.)

The rocklike characteristics that Jesus saw in Peter were not formed all at once. Near the time when Judas was betraying the Savior, Peter three times denied knowing Jesus. But in the deep grief that followed the crucifixion of the Savior and out of the deep

silence of his suffering, there finally came that strength which Christ had urged upon him ever since he called him Peter. Simon was severely tested and tried before he finally qualified as Peter the Rock.

Joseph Smith tested

Joseph Smith, the Prophet, was tried as few other men have been tried. From that day when he testified to the world that he had been blessed by a personal visitation from God, our Heavenly Father, and his Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, all the evil forces of the adversary seem to have been turned loose upon him.

Slandered, maligned, tarred and feathered, unjustly cast into prisons, subjected to inhuman treatment and humiliation, his soul was deeply tried.

There were times when Joseph wondered if the Lord as well as his friends had deserted him. From the very depths of his anguished soul he cried out: "O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?" He then pointed out the wrongs and unlawful oppressions inflicted upon the Saints. Then came this comforting assurance from the Lord: "My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

"And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.

"Thy friends do stand by thee, and they shall hail thee again with warm hearts and friendly hands." (D&C 121:1, 7-9.)

Joseph Smith was true, faithful, and unwavering to the trust placed in him. His associates were proud to declare to the world: "Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other

man that ever lived in it. . . . He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood. . . ." (D&C 135:3.)

Joseph Smith truly was tested, tried, and not found wanting. He measured up to every requirement expected of him.

Temptations of our day

Every generation since the world began has had its peculiar temptations, with Satan as their author. Today we have ours in abundance.

There are those who scoff at the idea that there is a Supreme Being. They declare and teach that God is dead.

Others ridicule the belief that there is a life after this. They contend that death is the end, that there will be no time of judgment, no accounting for our actions here in mortality, so why not live and be merry, for tomorrow we die?

There are those who would have us believe that the use of liquor, tobacco, and drugs is not harmful or injurious to the body; that illicit sex is acceptable, and dishonesty is justified if it helps to achieve an end.

It is a temptation to become so involved in the things of the world that we lose sight of more important values, the things of the spirit.

Passing the test

Not only the young people of the Church have trials and temptations, but each of us does. Like the Savior, we will all have our Gethsemane. And although the road may be rough at

times, if we will hold fast to the rod of iron, spoken of by Lehi, it will lead us through the mist of darkness. If we will not be dissuaded by the mocking voices of the world or lose our way and fall into the river or wander in strange roads, we will pass the challenging test of life that Abraham foresaw.

All the effort and struggle and sorrow will be well worth it, for we will earn the greatest of all gifts, the gift of eternal life. May this be our happy lot, I humbly pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Harold B. Lee

Elder Henry D. Taylor, Assistant to the Twelve, has spoken to us.

The congregation and the chorus will now join in singing "High On the Mountain Top."

The hymn, "High On the Mountain Top," was sung by the congregation.

President Lee

For the benefit of the television and radio audience who have just joined with us, we are gathered in the historical Mormon Tabernacle on Temple Square in this the first session of the 141st Semi-Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Elder Eldred G. Smith, Patriarch to the Church, will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Loren C. Dunn of the First Council of Seventy.