

and his wife to preside over a mission, regardless of their business situation or economic conditions, the answer is yes. All personal interests are pushed aside and they faithfully accept the call from the Lord through the First Presidency to preside over a mission for three years' time.

Each mission president's individual call, his experiences and faithfulness in accepting that call, adjusting his economic affairs, and completely readjusting the social life for himself and family, is a modern missionary miracle.

Response to mission call

For example, in a casual conversation I had recently with the president of one of the full-time missions of the Church, he told me that when he received his mission call from the First Presidency, he asked his employers for a leave of absence. Within three years his financial interest in the company in which he was employed would be large enough to support him and his family for the remainder of their lives.

His employers, being non-church members and unfavorable toward his going on a mission, refused to give him a leave of absence. Also, they informed him that he would lose all of his financial benefits in the company if he accepted the mission call. In spite of this terrific financial sacrifice and the loss of his job, he accepted the mission call and is now faithfully serving his church and his God.

I asked the mission president, "Why

didn't you tell the First Presidency of the financial loss you would suffer if you went on a mission at that time and ask them to postpone your call for three years?"

He replied, "The Lord didn't call me on a mission for three years from now. He called me to serve now. My wife and I decided to obey the call of the Lord and trust that our financial affairs would be taken care of later."

Such a sacrifice to render Christian service is certainly astounding. It is a modern missionary miracle.

Testimony

In closing, I bear my testimony that the true Church of Jesus Christ has been restored to earth by the Savior and other heavenly beings to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Membership in this church and living in accordance with the revealed teachings therein is the only way back to God. This church marks out the pathway that mankind must follow to attain eternal life in the presence of the Father and the Son.

In the name of Jesus Christ.
Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Milton R. Hunter of the First Council of Seventy has just spoken to us.

Elder Alvin R. Dyer, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, will now speak to us.

Elder Alvin R. Dyer

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

I am both humbled and grateful, my brothers and sisters, for the confidence of the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve for the new assignment given me in the Historical Department

of the Church. It is truly gratifying to be associated with men of the caliber of Leonard Arrington, the Church Historian; Earl Olson, the Church Archivist; and Donald T. Schmidt, Church Librarian.

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ian; and the other brethren who have been called to assist.

These are men of great spiritual devotion who have great capability in their respective fields. We shall seek the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord, and the counsel and direction of the Brethren, in the important task that lies ahead of us.

Association with the First Presidency and other leaders, and with you, my brothers and sisters, at conference time, is always a joy and a great spiritual influence.

The plan of life

The plan for a useful and successful life is contained in the gospel of Jesus Christ, given to us by the Redeemer of mankind, whose atoning sacrifice augments the plan and makes it possible for us to return to the presence of God our Heavenly Father.

When mortality, or the second estate of man, is completed, each individual will be prepared to continue his eternal journey into that place which the judgment of this life will place upon him. In this righteous, but penetrating, judgment, each of us shall go into the next estate of eternal existence for which we are best suited.

The principles of progression, or of retardation, judged by our behavior in the probation of mortality, are realities of concept, based upon revelation from God, both ancient and modern.

Darkness and enlightenment

In working out the plan of life and salvation down through the stream of time, men have developed among themselves periods of obedience to God's holy laws and, on the other hand, periods of rebellion against these same laws.

The declarations of the prophets of God contained in sacred historical writings tell of the changing conditions that have taken place among men. Clear reference is made to times of apostasy, when the rejection of truth

has been so widespread that the holy priesthood of God, the channel through which God works in dealing with mankind, has been withdrawn from among men.

Oscillating from these periods of spiritual darkness have been periods of enlightenment when the will of God has been revealed unto man and has to some extent been adhered to. These periods of enlightenment are known as dispensations of the gospel of Jesus Christ, times when God dispenses the wisdom of the eternities unto mankind for their benefit and blessing.

Pure knowledge, meaning revelation from God, is greater than the limited reasoning of men. The method that God has chosen to convey this knowledge unto mankind is through his chosen prophets, unto whom he sends his messengers with divine instructions and upon occasion by the majesty of his own appearance.

Thus, on the whole, as the pages of history are observed, noting the depressions and then again the periods of enlightenment that have held sway over mankind as they move through mortality, we come to know, broadly, that times of apostasy and times of restoration are two opposite poles of human existence. They are conditions between which mankind has oscillated, as internal and external conditions bear sway.

Gospel not new

In the light of this concept, the gospel that Jesus Christ proclaimed during his earthlife was not new. It was actually a restoration of the same truths that had been declared in former dispensations. He himself declared these truths unto ancient prophets who had been chosen as his instruments. He was known unto them as Jehovah, and by that name he gave commandments to the children of Israel. He has directed the plan of salvation from the very beginning of mankind upon the earth, thereby establishing the dispensations of Adam, of Enoch, of Noah, of Moses

and others, all bearing witness to a restoration by the divine dispensing of truths, making known unto mankind the redeeming principles of the gospel.

The willingness of God to dispense these truths unto mankind has ever been present, but there have been times when mankind, because of wickedness and rebellion, would not receive them.

In the depths of rebellion and apostasy, the masses of people are never responsive to gospel truths.

Suppression of freedom

The reflected lack of the principles of freedom in governments and institutions stands as a stumbling block to the furtherance of God's work among men. When the darkness and evil of apostasy have dominated the minds of men, apostasy has been fostered by the subjection of individual rights of freedom, and unrighteous dominion has been brought to bear by the institutions of men that know not God.

In these periods of darkness the forces of evil, under the direction of the evil one, the archenemy of Christ, implement doctrines of force, destroying the rights of the individual, making it almost impossible for those held in subjection to have the opportunity of repentance and regeneration. Without the spirit of freedom and the power of agency, there can be no functioning of the principles that would lead us to the gospel. It is difficult, if at all possible, to come to a state of regeneration so vital to progression and the fulfillment of the gospel plan.

The gospel of Jesus Christ will not flower or expand its influence under conditions where the will of the individual is suppressed. Those who have gained a conviction of the truth and have then been thrust into a condition of individual bondage may survive the ordeal on the strength of the truths that they have previously found and individually accepted, as did the early Christian martyrs or the martyrs

in any age who have stood up in death rather than denounce the truths that they have taken unto themselves by the power of agency. But under godless systems, where the individual never comes to know the truth, he is held by darkness.

From the dark ages, that period of time following the death of the apostles of the Lord in the meridian dispensation—which continued for about eleven hundred years, during which time there was no intelligent glorification of the individual—hardly a painted picture emerged that portrayed this important concept. Everything was lost in relentless subjection of the masses to the evil power of unrighteous dominion.

The Renaissance

Then came that period known as the Renaissance, which gave to men an inward longing for liberation of thought with the courage to face the evil forces that held them in subjection. Man again began to seek for freedom and truth. The Master of men had said many years before, ". . . ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32.) But this and other scripture, for many years, they had not even been privileged to read.

But God began to work with men, and their hearts turned toward him; and whenever the spark of freedom was found, it was influenced and fed by the natural forces of agency. Soon the desire for freedom, matched with the courage to fight and die for it, spread among men.

The question might well be asked, Why does freedom need to be restored as a forerunner to a new dispensation of the gospel of Jesus Christ? The answer is a simple one, for well the Lord knows that without the spirit of freedom in the souls of men, there could be no willing response to the gospel plan. For it is in the culture of freedom and the use of agency in that freedom that men come to know the difference between good and evil. This progress leads to yearnings in the hearts of good

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men, and eventually to gospel dispensations. This is the pattern to be noted down through the era of the historical writings.

A new dispensation

The continued longing for freedom led directly to the period known as the Reformation, which led to the foundation of America and the framing of the Constitution, concerning which the Lord has said:

"According to the laws and constitution of the people, which I have suffered to be established, and should be maintained for the rights and protection of all flesh, according to just and holy principles." (D&C 101:77.)

All of this in its proper order leads directly to the greatest period in the experience of man upon the earth, a new dispensation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This period was foreseen and referred to by the apostle Peter as the times of restitution or restoration of all things involving a new gospel dispensation. Here are his words as he speaks also of the coming of the Lord at this particular time:

"And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

"Whom the heaven 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.)

Personal visitation

The significant feature of the present dispensation was the inauguration of the same by the personal visitation of God the Father and his Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, referred to in the sacred historical writings of this church as the Sacred Grove appearance, which occurred in the spring of 1820 near Palmyra, New York, 152 years ago.

Upon this occasion Joseph Smith became the first of the prophets of this new dispensation of the gospel; and by virtue of divine instruction given

then and subsequent appearances of the Son of God and certain ancient prophets who hold keys of understanding pertaining to the gospel plan, he has caused to be established the kingdom of God upon the earth, that any of mankind may come unto it.

Last dispensation

The characteristics of this dispensation, as compared with other dispensations, are unique in that it is the last of all dispensations, concerning which the Prophet Joseph Smith received this divine information as contained in a revelation:

"Unto whom I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times; and for the fulness of times, in the which I will gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth." (D&C 27:13.)

The apostle Paul, writing unto the Ephesian saints, speaks also of this important final dispensation in connection with the inheritances that will come to the faithful. I quote what he said and must have seen in vision:

"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; even in him." (Eph. 1:10.)

A dispensation of the gospel of Jesus Christ is now established with prophets, seers, and revelators. The church and kingdom of God has been established, and the inhabitants of the earth "may receive it, and be prepared for the days to come, in the which the Son of Man shall come down in heaven, clothed in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth." (D&C 65:5.)

Of these things I bear my personal witness as conveyed to me by the power of the Spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. □