

the covenants that it will be necessary for them to make.

What hope, what comfort, what assurance and joy this promise should bring to the hearts of all who love their families! Surely it is true that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (2 Cor. 2:9.)

And, of course, he has said that they who love him keep his commandments and covenants.

Obligation to keep covenants

President Joseph F. Smith reminded us that "we cannot neglect, slight, or depart from the spirit, meaning, intent and purpose, of these covenants . . . that we have entered into with our Father in heaven without shearing [or depriving] ourselves of our glory, strength, right and title to his blessings, and to the gifts and manifestations of his Spirit." (*Improvement Era*, vol. 9 [August 1906], p. 813.)

For God surely will not be mocked!

Let me repeat, each one of us has made covenants with the Lord and has agreed before God in sacred

places that we will observe his laws, which, after all, are the principles by which we must learn to live in order to qualify ourselves for the greatest of all the gifts of God, which he says is eternal life, our life in the "family kingdom."

I testify to you, brethren and sisters, that I know that God lives and that he has, because of his love for us, condescended to make covenants with us, in order that we may be spared from failure, from sorrow, from regret, and that we may rise to the full heights of glory that are promised to those who are faithful and endure to the end.

My brothers and sisters, we are a covenant-making people. Let us also be a covenant-keeping people, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Harold B. Lee

Thank you, Brother Christiansen. Brother Christiansen, Assistant to the Twelve, has just spoken to us.

Elder Theodore M. Burton, Assistant to the Twelve, will now address us. He will be followed by Elder Eldred G. Smith, Patriarch to the Church.

Elder Theodore M. Burton

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

Brothers and sisters, I desire this afternoon to bear my witness to you of the divine calling that has come to these brethren who lead us. For almost forty years I have watched as the Lord has honed and polished and prepared President Lee as our teacher, as our stake president, whom we so much loved, as an apostle, and now as President of the Church. I am grateful and pledge my support to him and his counselors.

President Tanner is our home teacher, who watches over us and cares for us in our home. We are grateful for him and pledge our loyalty to him. We are grateful for President Romney, who fourteen years ago came to Germany and helped me to become a better missionary. I have loved and respected him ever since. And these my brethren who sit before you today are men of God, and I am grateful for the teachings they have given me.

Now may I share a thought with you this afternoon.

Genealogy

I received a letter recently in which I was asked why, as president of the Genealogical Society, I didn't speak about genealogy. The writer also asked why my brethren did not preach about genealogy, when it was one of the fundamental priesthood programs of the Church. This quite startled me, for I have heard some excellent sermons on that subject given by my brethren and have given many sermons on genealogy myself.

Perhaps we have all been too subtle. Perhaps our understanding of priesthood genealogy is so broad that we expect all Church members to think of priesthood genealogy as we do. In our understanding it includes the whole plan of salvation, in which, through righteous living and revealed sacred ordinances, families are bound together eternally, worthy to live in the celestial kingdom in the very presence of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost in an exalted, resurrected state. Perhaps we *have* been too subtle.

Individual responsibility

Stated, then, in simple words, I say to every member of the Church that you have a personal, individual responsibility to become engaged in priesthood genealogical activity. The real impact of the priesthood genealogy program is one of individual responsibility. The actual work must be performed by individuals, not by organizations. What is everybody's business is nobody's business, so I must say that this work is your individual responsibility and each of you, as an individual, must become converted to this work as a personal responsibility. It is not my responsibility alone, nor that of your stake president, nor that of your bishop alone. It is not confined to the high priests. Neither is

genealogy and temple work reserved for older people. It should not be put off until you retire or become too old and infirm to do anything else.

A vital program

Priesthood genealogy is an exciting, living, vital program involving the whole family. Elijah came to turn the hearts of children to their parents and parents to their children, so priesthood genealogy and temple work is a family affair, a total family program involving children, youth, and parents. We ought to change our attitudes toward priesthood genealogy and realize that the real impact of this program converges on each individual member of the Church.

Some persons have asked me, "Just what *is* my personal responsibility in this work?" I answer that your individual responsibility is to be, or to become, worthy to enter the temple of God to participate in ordinances of salvation for yourself and for others. Youth are to be baptized in behalf of the dead. Young adults are to receive an endowment of power and to be married in the Lord's appointed way. Wives are to be sealed to husbands and have their children sealed to them for all eternity. Thus, just as you can be saviors for the living through active missionary work, so you are to qualify yourselves to become saviors for those who are dead who rely on you for help and assistance.

Saviors on Mt. Zion

As revealed by the scriptures, one of the characteristics of these last days is the appearance of saviors on the earth. This was prophesied in Old Testament times:

"And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's." (Obad. 21.)

It was prophesied by Paul in New Testament times, referring to people who had lived on the earth in times of old:

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

"God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." (Heb. 11:39-40.)

It has also been prophesied of us who live today:

"Therefore, blessed are ye if ye continue in my goodness, a light unto the Gentiles, and through this priesthood, a savior unto my people Israel. The Lord hath said it. Amen." (D&C 86:11.)

So the Lord himself has placed his seal of approval upon this work.

Savior "for your dead"

A logical question then follows: For *whom* am I to be a savior? In section 127 of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 6, the Prophet Joseph Smith used these words: "for your dead." In the next section, in verse 15, he continued speaking of our ancestors:

"For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation, as Paul says concerning the fathers [speaking collectively]—that they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead [i.e., our fathers and mothers] be made perfect."

Joseph Smith explained the coming of Elijah as follows:

"... It is sufficient to know, in this case, that the earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children. . . ." (D&C 128:18.)

Our dead, then, are clearly our own progenitors or direct ancestors, as Joseph Smith explained:

"But how are they to become saviors on Mount Zion? By building their temples, erecting their baptismal fonts, and going forth and receiving all the ordinances, baptisms, confirmations, washings, anointings, ordinations, and sealing powers upon their heads, in behalf of all their progenitors who are dead, and redeem them that they may

come forth in the first resurrection and be exalted to thrones of glory with them; and herein is the chain that binds the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, which fulfills the mission of Elijah." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* [Deseret Book, 1968], p. 330.)

A blessing and a curse

Do you remember that God said that unless this was done, the earth would be smitten with a curse? What curse? Why, earth life itself becomes a curse to those who fail in their mission in mortality. Their earthly existence becomes a stumbling block for them instead of a glorious stepping-stone to the ladder of exaltation and glorification. When God speaks to man, his words can become either a curse or a blessing, as Moses explained to the children of Israel:

"Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse;

"A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day:

"And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known." (Deut. 11:26-28.)

So this command of God, given through his prophets today, is as binding upon us as were the commands of God binding upon the children of Israel.

Direct progenitors

But I would like to turn again to this personal responsibility which God has given us to become saviors on Mount Zion. Note that we are to become saviors for our own direct ancestors or progenitors and not for collateral relatives who are direct-line ancestors of somebody else. Note that it is *our* line of ancestry that is to be preserved,

for the promises of Abraham come to us through these lines of lineage.

God gave the following promise to Abraham, referring to us who are Abraham's descendants:

"And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall arise up and bless thee, as their father;

"And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal." (Abr. 2:10-11.)

Genealogical responsibility

Brigham Young taught that our genealogical responsibility is to our own family first. He said:

"We have a work to do just as important in its sphere as the Savior's work was in its sphere. Our fathers cannot be made perfect without us; we cannot be made perfect without them. They have done their work and now sleep. We are now called upon to do ours; which is to be the greatest work man ever performed on the earth. . . .

"There must be this chain in the holy Priesthood; it must be welded together from the latest generation that lives on the earth back to Father Adam, to bring back all that can be saved and placed where they can receive salvation and glory in some kingdom. This Priesthood has to do it; this Priesthood is for this purpose. . . .

"The ordinance of sealing must be performed here man to man, and woman to man, and children to parents, etc., until the chain of generation is made perfect in the sealing ordinances back to Father Adam. . . .

"Now, all you children, are you looking to the salvation of your fathers? Are you seeking diligently to redeem those that have died without the Gospel, inasmuch as they sought the Lord Almighty to obtain promises for you? For our fathers did obtain promises that their seed should not be forgotten. O ye children of the fathers, look at these things. You are to enter into the temples of the Lord and officiate for your forefathers." (*Discourses of Brigham Young* [Deseret Book, 1971], pp. 406-408.)

President Woodruff received a revelation on this subject and presented it in a general conference on April 8, 1894:

"We want the Latter-day Saints from this time to trace their genealogies as far as they can, and to be sealed to their fathers and mothers. Have children sealed to their parents and run this chain through as far as you can get it. . . . This is the will of the Lord to his people, and I think when you come to reflect upon it, you will find it to be true." (James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency* [Bookcraft, 1966], vol. 3, pp. 256-57.)

Need for genealogical work

The responsibility to officiate for our direct-line ancestors has continued to this day. Our recently deceased President Joseph Fielding Smith, whom we loved and respected, contrasted our personal responsibility with the responsibility of the Church:

"The Lord has given to the Church the responsibility of preaching the gospel to the nations of the earth. *This is the greatest responsibility of the Church.* Men are to be taught the gospel and called to repentance and warned. When they refuse to heed the warning, they must be left without excuse.

"The Lord has also placed upon the individual members of the Church a responsibility. *It is our duty as individuals to seek after our immediate dead—*

those of our own line. This is the greatest individual responsibility that we have, and we should carry it through in behalf of our fathers who have gone before." (*Doctrines of Salvation* [Bookcraft, 1955], vol. 2, p. 146.)

So, without putting any one priesthood program before any other, for each one is important, I say in behalf of all my brethren, and say to you personally, that we fully appreciate the need for genealogical work that will bring people to the temples righteously and worthily to unite their families into the eternal family of God the Eternal Father.

Elder Eldred G. Smith

Patriarch to the Church

It was a pleasure for me to sustain Brother Harold B. Lee as the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and to sustain all of the other General Authorities this morning.

I wish to express appreciation for that sustaining vote in my behalf and pledge to all my leaders here my full support. I am willing to do all that is required of me to help build up the kingdom of the Lord upon the earth.

Why build temples?

A question that is often asked by many and comes to the minds of many who are not members of our faith is: "Why do Latter-day Saints build temples?"

Our third Article of Faith is: "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."

The fourth Article of Faith follows: "We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immer-

I bear my witness of the divinity of this priesthood goal, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Harold B. Lee

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sion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Need for baptism

With God, all laws and ordinances must be complied with and obeyed. Christ said to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

"Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:3-5.)

Christ had already confirmed the fullness and exactness of this law in his own compliance thereto, as recorded in Matthew: "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

"But John forbad him, saying, I