

Elder Ezra Taft Benson

Of the Council of the Twelve

This morning we sustained unanimously Harold B. Lee to what I believe is the highest office in the world, the earthly President of the church of Jesus Christ. I have known this great man longer possibly than any other one of the General Authorities. I honor him; I have admired him since we were boys together over fifty years ago. With all my heart I love and sustain him as a prophet of God, as an inspired leader, ideally qualified to lead the church of Christ in our difficult day. May God inspire us as members of the Church with wisdom to follow his noble leadership.

I seek an interest in your faith and prayers, that my brief message, which is directed primarily to those who are not yet members, might bring help and conviction to their souls.

Seeking divine guidance

While Saul was on the road to Damascus, he was stopped by a heavenly vision and the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ. And Saul responded with these momentous words: “. . . Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? . . .” (Acts 9:6.) To this the Lord responded by sending Saul to see one of his authorized servants to receive direction and a blessing.

A man can ask no more important question in his life than that which Paul asked: “. . . Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” A man can take no greater action than to pursue a course that will bring to him the answer to that question and then to carry out that answer. What would the Lord Jesus Christ have us do? He has answered that question by saying, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48), and, “Therefore, what manner of men

ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Ne. 27:27.)

Christ, our example

Christ, then, has set us the example of what we should be like and what we should do. While many men have admirable qualities, there is only one man who ever walked the earth who was without sin, whose father of his physical body was God the Father, and who had the power to resurrect his own body. This Jesus is our exemplar and has commanded us to follow in his steps.

God the Father has given Jesus Christ a name above all others, so that eventually every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the light, and no one can come back into the presence of our Father in heaven except through him. Christ is God the Son and possesses every virtue in its perfection. Therefore, the only measure of true greatness is how close a man can become like Jesus. That man is greatest who is most like Christ, and those who love him most will be most like him.

How, then, does a man imitate God, follow his steps, and walk as he walked, which we are commanded to do? We must study the life of Christ, learn his commandments, and do them. God has promised that to follow this course will lead a man to an abundant life and a fullness of joy and the peace and rest which those who are heavy-burdened long for. To learn of Christ necessitates the study of the scriptures and the testimonies of those who know him. We come to know him through prayer and the inspiration and revelation that God has promised to those who keep his commandments.

Learn the commandments

And how do you learn the commandments? You learn the commandments through the words of the Lord in the scriptures, through the revelations received by his authorized servants, the Light of Christ, like a conscience that comes to every man, and through personal revelation.

It is significant that when Paul asked the question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Christ directed Paul to one of the Lord's authorized servants. So it was with Cornelius, who after prayer was instructed to send men to contact Peter. (See Acts 10.) It has always been so—that whenever God has had his prophets upon the earth, men could go to them to learn of Christ and his commandments.

The inspired words of these prophets, when written down, became scripture, and whenever God has his representatives on the earth, there is always new revelation and new scripture. Only when men became so corrupt that the prophets were taken out of their midst did scriptures cease. And God stated that only through his authorized representatives could men receive the ordinances essential for salvation and the commandments necessary for the perfecting of his children.

Words of living prophets

Speaking to his prophets, the Lord said: "He that receiveth you receiveth me. . . ." (Matt. 10:40.) Always the words of the living prophet took precedence, for it was God's message to the people at that particular time. Had any man accepted the ancient scripture in the days of Noah but refused to follow the revelation that Noah received and failed to board the ark, he would have been drowned. Always the words of the living prophets are of the most vital con-

cern to the people; and always, if a man would know of Christ and learn his commandments so that he can obey them, he must seek to find his authorized representatives.

For centuries, because of the wickedness of men, prophets of God no longer walked the earth, so scripture ended with the last words in the New Testament. Confusion and contention reigned in so-called Christendom, for all they had was the ancient scripture, but they were without the prophets of God to explain it to them and to receive new revelation, new scripture, and to be authorized to direct the work of the ministry.

The Restoration

But in 1820, the greatest single event since the resurrection of the Christ occurred. God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, personally visited a young boy by the name of Joseph Smith, who had been praying to know which church to join. God, our Father, spoke to the lad and said, ". . . *This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith 2:17.) God the Son told Joseph Smith not to join any of the churches. Joseph was to learn that the Lord's true church was not on the earth; that living prophets of God, who were the foundation of the church, had not walked the earth for centuries; and that with their deaths, the rock of revelation on which the church was built ceased; and so there was no new scripture.

Eventually, to Joseph Smith appeared the men who were the last authorized servants to direct the church of Jesus Christ—Peter, James, and John. These glorified beings ordained Joseph Smith with the same authority they had received from Jesus, so that once again there was a prophet of God on the earth who could say, ". . . thus saith the Lord." (D&C 44:1.) Joseph Smith ordained others with the authority that he had received, and so the church of Jesus Christ was restored in these latter

days—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly known as the Mormon Church.

The Book of Mormon

In due time, another heavenly messenger came to Joseph Smith to tell him that God was about to give to the earth a scriptural account of the early inhabitants of America, as the Bible is a scriptural account that covers the other side of the world. This American scripture that was translated by Joseph Smith, through the inspiration of heaven, is called the Book of Mormon. It tells, among other things, of Christ's personal appearance to God's children here in America after his resurrection in Jerusalem and of his instructions to them. The mission of the Book of Mormon is to be a companion volume with the Bible, to serve as a second witness that Jesus is the Christ, to show that God loves one nation as another, and to reduce contention by making clear many of the doctrines that have confused Christendom.

Joseph Smith received many revelations from Jesus Christ, as have the prophets who have succeeded him, which means that new scripture has been given. The Lord's mouthpiece and his prophet on the face of the earth today is President Harold B. Lee, who received his authority through a line of prophets going back to Joseph Smith, who was ordained by Peter, James, and John, who were ordained by Christ, who was and is the head of the Church, the Creator of this earth, and the God before whom all men must stand accountable.

"Come and see"

Now this marvelous message—that God has spoken to prophets in our day and reestablished his church—is for all the world. When Nathanael questioned Philip, telling him that he had found Jesus, Philip responded by saying, "Come and see." (John 1:46.)

So do we respond, "Come and see." Men can deceive you, but God will not. If you sincerely desire to know of the

truthfulness of this message, then make it a matter of fervent prayer, study it out, test it out, and God will let you know.

Would you like to know if Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and if the Book of Mormon is scripture sent from God? Then put it to the test. Read the Book of Mormon, and near its close you will find a promise that is given to everyone who reads that volume; and this is the promise: that if you will ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, if this book is true, and if you will ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, then our Heavenly Father will manifest the truth of it unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost. (See Moro. 10:4.)

This is the challenge and the test. I testify to you that I have read the Book of Mormon and that I have put it to the test; that God has revealed unto me the truthfulness of this added volume of scripture and revealed unto me that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God; and that Harold B. Lee is his prophet and representative and stands today as the earthly President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the one man on the earth who holds the keys of God's kingdom, as Peter did anciently.

Need for a prophet

Let me ask, do we need a true prophet of the Lord on the earth today? Did the people in Noah's day need a prophet to warn them spiritually and temporally? Had a man refused to follow Noah, would he have been saved from the flood? Yet the Bible tells us that in the last days in which we live, the wickedness of the people will become comparable to the wickedness of the people in Noah's day when God cleansed the earth by flood. Do you think we need a prophet today to warn us and prepare us for the cleansing that God promised will come, this time by fire?

Men's hearts are failing them, spiri-

Friday, October 6

First Day

tually and temporally. Is it of interest for you to know that God has revealed many things for your blessing? He has revealed to a modern prophet a law of health, which, if obeyed, promises a man that he can run and not be weary, and walk and not faint.

Do you think men would despair so much or commit suicide if they knew through latter-day revelation about their preexistent state, where they came from, why they are here, where they are going, and the great possibilities that lie in store for them?

Home Evening program

With the satanic attempts to break apart the family and create disunion and strife in the home, would you be impressed with a program inaugurated by a modern prophet of the Lord some fifty years ago called the home evening program? This one-night-a-week program brings together all the members of the family for some spiritual and character guidance, a discussion of family goals and plans, a display of family talent, and games and refreshments.

The Church distributes to its members a yearly manual with suggestions for this home evening program. Those members who diligently hold these home evenings are given a promised blessing by a prophet of God of what will result. Listen to this promised blessing:

"Love at home and obedience to parents will increase, faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influences and temptations which beset them." (*Family Home Evening Manual*, 1965, p. v.)

Would you like that blessing for your home?

Would you be interested to know that by latter-day revelation the Lord has said that marriage is ordained of God, and that a couple married in one of our temples by those who hold the authority to bind on earth and it will be

bound in heaven can be married, not till death do you part, but for time and all eternity? Would you like the assurance that comes to that couple that if they and their children are faithful, they shall continue together as a family unit in the next life?

Spread of wickedness

Are you concerned about the increasing subversion in this blessed country, and other countries of the free world, and the spread of wickedness by a giant conspiracy? Would you be interested in reading the Book of Mormon, which records the downfall of two great ancient American civilizations as a result of internal secret conspiracies and contains a warning to us today that when we see these conditions in our midst, the Lord commands us to awake to our awful situation? With the increasing amount of aid and trade that we are providing the enemy of freedom, you might be interested to know what the Book of Mormon says will happen to a nation that upholds this conspiracy. Would you like to know of the warnings of the prophets about our increasing descent down the soul-destroying road of socialism and what they have told us to do about it?

Jesus knew of the calamities that would befall the world, which is one of the reasons why he gave revelations to Joseph Smith and other prophets. Would you like to know of a program that we have had for many years of instructing our members to have on hand at least a year's supply of food, clothing, and where possible, fuel, and of getting out of financial bondage? And did you know that God is giving his church direction to make it independent of the world?

These and many, many more revelations of great blessings and help for today, with programs of preparation for tomorrow and eternity, are available now through The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Pathway to eternal life

What manner of men are we to be? Verily, even as Jesus Christ. To be like him we must study his life, learn his commandments, and do them. That is the pathway to joy and abundant and eternal life.

Prophets of God have known him—they have told us of him and of his commandments. They have been sent of God and through revelation have instructed us in the way we should go. There is no more crucial question than that a man should be constantly asking than that which Paul asked: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" There is no more essential answer than that which he received—of going to those who are authorized by the Lord to give directions.

"Come, listen to a prophet's voice,
And hear the word of God.
And in the way of truth rejoice,
And sing for joy aloud.
We've found the way the prophets went
Who lived in days of yore;
Another prophet now is sent
This knowledge to restore."

—*Hymns*, no. 46

Invitation to investigate

May I invite you to further investigate The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—to read the Book of Mormon. There are representatives of the Church in your general area who, without any obligation on your part, will be happy to come and tell you about the Church. You are welcome to attend our meetings. If you would like some free literature or additional information, feel free to write us at our headquarters by simply addressing us in Salt Lake City.

And now, may I leave you my witness that I know that God lives—he is not dead; that God loves his children; that we are all brothers and sisters, children of the same Father in the spirit; that he blesses us and wants

to further bless us, and to that end he has established his church and sent his prophets. Today that church is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and his prophet and mouthpiece is President Harold B. Lee. I know this as I know that I live, and I bear this testimony humbly and gratefully in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Harold B. Lee

Thank you, Elder Benson, for that powerful testimony.

The Sunday School conference meeting, we remind you, will be held in the Tabernacle this evening at 7 o'clock, to which we invite all Sunday School officers and teachers and their families, and all priesthood members who have Sunday School responsibilities.

Also we remind you of the Welfare meeting to be held at 7:30 in the morning in the Assembly Hall. Regional representatives, stake presidencies, high councilors involved in Welfare work, bishoprics, and stake and ward Relief Society presidencies are invited to attend.

We have announced heretofore the wide coverage of these conference sessions. Nearly two-thirds of the world will be able to receive the broadcasts and re-broadcasts over International Short-wave Radio Station WNYW, and then re-broadcasts over KSL Radio beginning at midnight tonight.

We thank the sisters of the combined Relief Society choruses of the Granger, Jordan and Midvale Regions for their singing today. We are grateful for the presence of these lovely sisters and for the beautiful numbers they have rendered.

With Sister Barnes conducting and Brother Cundick at the organ, the chorus will now favor us with "I Know that My Redeemer Lives."