

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

Of the Council of the Twelve

I believe that Spencer W. Kimball was foreordained to be the president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; to be the prophet, seer, and revelator to the Lord's people; and to be the mouthpiece of God on earth for the time and season that lies ahead.

Calling of Spencer W. Kimball

I know he was called and chosen and ordained to this ministry by the spirit of prophecy and revelation and was present when the Spirit of the Lord testified to each member of the Council of the Twelve that it was the mind and will of him whose witnesses we are, and on whose errand we serve, that President Kimball should now step forward and lead his people.

It was as though the Lord by his own voice said: "My servant President Harold B. Lee was true and faithful in all things that I appointed him to do; his ministry among you is completed; and I have called him to other and greater labors in my eternal vineyard. And I, the Lord, now call my servant President Spencer W. Kimball to lead my people and to continue the work of preparing them for that great day when I shall come to reign personally upon the earth. And I now say of him as I said of my servant Joseph Smith: ' . . . thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

"For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.

"For thus saith the Lord God: Him have I inspired to move the cause of Zion in mighty power for good, and

his diligence I know, and his prayers I have heard.'" (D&C 21:4-5, 7.)

Living oracles

It seems easy to believe in the prophets who have passed on and to suppose that we believe and follow the counsel they gave under different circumstances and to other people. But the great test that confronts us, as in every age when the Lord has a people on earth, is whether we will give heed to the words of his living oracles and follow the counsel and direction they give for our day and time.

"We be Abraham's children, the Jews said to Jove;

We shall follow our Father, inherit his trove.

But from Jesus our Lord, came the stinging rebuke:

Ye are children of him, whom ye list to obey;

Were ye Abraham's seed, ye would walk in his path,

And escape the strong chains of the father of wrath.

"We have Moses the seer, and the prophets of old;

All their words we shall treasure as silver and gold.

But from Jesus our Lord, came the sobering voice:

If to Moses ye turn, then give heed to his word;

Only then can ye hope for rewards of great worth,

For he spake of my coming and labors on earth.

"We have Peter and Paul, in their steps let us trod;

So religionists say, as they worship their God.

But speaks He who is Lord of the living
and dead:
In the hands of those prophets, those
teachers and seers,
Who abide in your day have I given the
keys;
Unto them ye must turn, the Eternal to
please."

—Bruce R. McConkie

Stature of present leaders

Accordingly it is my desire to lay before us the plain fact that these humble men who preside over the church and kingdom of God on earth in our day are like unto the prophets and apostles of old and are the ones whom God hath chosen to lead and direct his earthly kingdom in these last days. Those of us who sit almost daily at the feet of Presidents Spencer W. Kimball, N. Eldon Tanner, and Marion G. Romney marvel at the wisdom and judgment that attend their decisions and recognize them as preachers of righteousness of the same stature as Peter, James, and John, who were the First Presidency of the church in their day.

May I say that there is no chance in the call of these brethren to direct the Lord's work on earth. His hand is in it. He knows the end from the beginning. He ordained and established the plan of salvation and decreed that his everlasting gospel should be revealed to man in a series of dispensations commencing with Adam and continuing to Joseph Smith. And he—the Almighty—chooses the prophets and apostles who minister in his name and present his message to the world in every age and dispensation. He selects and foreordains his ministers; he sends them to earth at the times before appointed; he guides and directs their continuing mortal preparations; and he then calls them to those positions they were foreordained to receive from before the foundations of the earth.

Preparation of President Kimball

May I take President Spencer W. Kimball as an illustration and pattern of one who was prepared, foreordained, and called to leadership among the Lord's people. He was, it is true, born in the household of faith. Like Jacob, who inherited spiritual talents from Isaac and Abraham, so is he endowed by natural inheritance with those talents and abilities that prepare him for his present position of apostolic presidency.

But more than mortal birth, more than mortal preparation are involved. He was born in the household of faith for a reason, and it was not this life alone that prepared him to stand as a minister of light and truth and salvation to his fellow mortals. The fact is, he is a spirit son of God who was called and chosen and foreordained before the foundations of the earth were laid, and he is now fulfilling the destiny designed for him from the preexistence, and promised him, in our presence, as we sat with him in the grand council when God himself was there.

Joseph Smith said, "Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the grand council of heaven before this world was." Then the Prophet said of himself, "I suppose that I was ordained to this very office in that grand council." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 365.) President Kimball now wears the mantle of Joseph Smith and was a participant in the operation of the same law of foreordination.

Blessings of foreordination

Abraham, our father, who also was present in this council, was privileged to see in vision the hosts of preexistent spirits. "Among all these," he said, "... were many of the noble and great ones," whom he described as being

Saturday, April 6

Second Day

"good." (Abr. 3:22.) Abraham saw that God the Eternal Father "stood in the midst" of those mighty ones and said, "These I will make my rulers; . . . and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born." (Abr. 3:23.)

And as with Abraham, so with all the prophets, and for that matter so, to one degree or another, with the whole house of Israel and with all the members of the Lord's earthly church—all are participants in the blessings of foreordination.

To Jeremiah the Lord said: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." (Jer. 1:5.)

All those who receive the Melchizedek Priesthood in this life were, as Alma teaches, "called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God," because they were among the noble and great in that premortal sphere. (Al. 13:3.)

Doctrine of election

And Paul says that through this law of foreordination, which he calls the doctrine of election, there came to the whole house of Israel "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." (Rom. 9:4.) He says that the faithful members of the Church, those "that love God" and "are called according to his purpose," are foreordained "to be conformed to the image of his Son," to be "joint-heirs with Christ," and to have eternal life in our Father's kingdom. (Rom. 8:17, 28.)

He says also of members of the Church that God "hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love," and that we were foreordained to become the chil-

dren of Jesus Christ by adoption, thus gaining a "forgiveness of sins" in this life and an inheritance of eternal glory in the life to come. (Eph. 1:7.)

Law of foreordination

Our revelations, ancient and modern, abound in pronouncements relative to the law of foreordination, both as it applies to specific individuals called according to the foreknowledge of God to special labors in mortality and as it applies to the blessings promised that host of valiant souls who are born in the lineage of Israel and who hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and come into his sheepfold on earth.

Christ himself is the great prototype of all foreordained prophets. He was chosen in the councils of eternity to be the Savior and Redeemer. Of him Peter said he was "a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet. 1:19-20), as the one who should come in the meridian of time to work out the infinite and eternal atonement. For 4,000 years all the prophets testified of his coming and proclaimed his goodness and grace.

Mary, the mother of our Lord "after the manner of the flesh" (1 Ne. 11:18); Moses, the greatest prophet ever to minister in Israel; John the Revelator, whose mission it was to see the visions of the end of the world; and Joseph Smith, the prophet and seer of the restoration, were all designated by name hundreds or thousands of years before their mortal ministries, because their foreordained work was known and envisioned in advance.

The work to be done by John the Baptist, by the ancient Twelve, by Columbus, by the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and by the framers of the Constitution of the United States was all known and arranged for in advance. And all these are but illustrations and patterns, for all of the Lord's work is planned and prepared in ad-

vance, and those who are called and chosen to do the work receive their commission and ordination from him, first in the preexistence and then, if they remain true and faithful, again here in mortality.

Noble in preexistence

What then of our President, the man whom the Lord has chosen to represent him and preside in his kingdom for the time and season ahead? Truly he is more than the offspring of faithful fathers. He is in fact a son of God, a spirit offspring of the Almighty. He dwelt with the Eternal Father, saw his face, heard his voice, and what is more important than all else, he believed his word and kept his law.

By obedience, by conformity, by personal righteousness, because he elected to follow in the path of the Chosen and Beloved Son, Spencer W. Kimball was noble and great in the preexistence. Above all his other talents, he developed the talent for spirituality—the talent to believe and accept the truth, the talent to desire righteousness.

He knew and worshipped the Lord Jehovah, who was “like unto God.” (Abr. 3: 24.) He was a friend of Adam and Enoch. He took counsel from Noah and Abraham. He sat in meetings with Isaiah and Nephi. He served in the heavenly kingdom with Joseph Smith and Brigham Young.

Preexistence not remote

Preexistence is not some remote and mysterious place. All of us are but a few years removed from the Eternal Presence, from him whose children we are and in whose house we dwell. All of us are separated by a thin veil only from the friends and fellow laborers with whom we served on the Lord’s errand before our eternal spirits took up their abodes in tabernacles of clay.

True, a curtain has been drawn so we do not recall our associations there.

But we do know that our Eternal Father has all power, all might, all dominion, and all truth and that he lives in the family unit. We do know that we are his children, created in his image, endowed with power and ability to become like him. We know he gave us our agency and ordained the laws by obedience to which we can obtain eternal life. We know we had friends and associates there. We know we were schooled and trained and taught in the most perfect educational system ever devised, and that by obedience to his eternal laws we developed infinite varieties and degrees of talents.

Talents acquired

And hence comes the doctrine of foreordination. When we come into mortality, we bring the talents, capacities, and abilities acquired by obedience to law in our prior existence. Mozart composed and published sonatas when but eight years of age because he was born with musical talent. Melchizedek came into this world with such faith and spiritual capacity that “when a child he feared God, and stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire.” (Gen. 14:26. Inspired Version.) Cain, on the other hand, like Lucifer, was a liar from the beginning and was told in this life: “. . . thou shalt be called Perdition; for thou wast also before the world.” (Moses 5:24.)

A chosen people

Now this is the doctrine of foreordination; this is the doctrine of election. This is the reason why the Lord has a chosen and favored and peculiar people on earth; and this is the reason he said: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

“And I give unto them eternal life. . . .” (John 10:27-28.)

A knowledge of these wondrous truths places upon us a greater burden than rests upon any other people to

Saturday, April 6

Second Day

follow Christ—to take his yoke upon us, to keep his commandments, to do ever those things that please him. And if we love and serve him, we will give heed to the words of the apostles and prophets whom he sends to reveal and teach his word among us.

A listening ear

The great need in the world today is not for the Lord to send a prophet to reveal his mind and will. He has done that; we have a prophet; we are guided by many men who have the spirit of inspiration. The great need today is for men to have a listening ear and to give heed to the words that fall from the lips of those who wear the prophetic mantle.

God be praised that there is a prophet in Israel!

God be implored that we may have a listening ear and give heed to the voice of his prophet!

God be thanked that he has poured out his Spirit upon us so that we know of the truth and divinity of the great latter-day work, and to its eternal verity I testify in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Spencer W. Kimball

Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the Council of the Twelve has been our concluding speaker.

We remind the brethren of the General Priesthood Meeting which will convene here tonight at 7 p.m. in the Tabernacle.

The Sunday morning session will be broadcast by many radio and television stations in the western United States, and by short-wave radio to England, Europe, Mexico, South America, Central America, Africa, and parts of Asia.

The nationwide CBS Radio 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.

We are grateful to the lovely children of this Primary Chorus for the inspiring music they have rendered here today. Thank you, lovely children, for your presence at this session of the conference this afternoon.

The Children's Chorus, with Sister Patricia Maughan conducting and Brother Roy M. Darley at the organ, will now sing two hymns especially arranged for this occasion: "Come, Listen to a Prophet's Voice," and "We Thank Thee O God, for a Prophet." Ricky Tanner is the soloist.

The benediction will then be offered by Elder Charles A. Didier, regional representative and mission representative of the Twelve.

The Primary Children's Chorus sang two hymns as follows: "Come, Listen to a Prophet's Voice," and "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

The benediction was pronounced by Elder Charles A. Didier.

The conference was then adjourned until 7 o'clock p.m.