

hear from President Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve.

The song, "We Ever Pray for Thee," was rendered by the women's chorus of the Tabernacle Choir.

President Kimball

President Ezra Taft Benson, president of the Council of the Twelve, will now address us.

He will be followed by Elder Henry D. Taylor, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve.

President Ezra Taft Benson

President of the Council of the Twelve

Humbly and gratefully I stand before you this glorious Sabbath day. I'm sure, President Kimball, that in addition to these lovely sisters of the Tabernacle Choir, we all join in praying for you, our prophet dear, as the song says. May I say to Elder L. Tom Perry, the new member of the Twelve, you are entering one of the sweetest associations among men this side of heaven. We welcome you into the Council of the Twelve and welcome in the same spirit also Elders J. Thomas Fyans and Neal A. Maxwell as Assistants to the Twelve.

Passing of a prophet

My brothers and sisters, my feelings have been made tender as have many thousands, through the passing of our beloved leader, President Harold B. Lee. For 55 years in mortal life we have been associated, and prior to that, I feel sure, in premortal life. I have received the sweet assurance also and the comforting assurance that there is no untimely passing of a prophet of God. President Lee's impressive earthly service is finished. He has been called to further important work in the great program of the Lord, which moves forward on both sides of the veil. He was a man with deep spiritual insight, with Christlike attributes.

His great objective has been to help save the souls of the children of men. The Lord said to the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God." (D&C 18:10.)

This is our first interest as a church—to save and exalt the souls of the children of men. President Lee was interested in this great project above all others. I am grateful for the inspiration that he brought to the youth of Zion, to our Father's children everywhere, and to the great cause of truth throughout the world.

President Spencer W. Kimball

For 30 years I have sat at the side of President Spencer W. Kimball. We came into the Council of the Twelve together. I know this great man. I love him. I honor him. I respect him. He is truly one of God's noblemen—a humble, inspired prophet of God. With all my heart I sustain him. And with him I love all of our Father's children—of every race, creed, nationality, or political persuasion.

I rejoice in the program which President Kimball and his counselors have had a major part in developing under the leadership of President Lee. There is no richer program anywhere in the world for the building of men and women and providing the answers to the problems that face parents, families, and individuals. Through President Kimball's inspired leadership we will continue to strengthen and build on that program. It is a program that is needed today as never before.

*Sunday, April 7**Third Day*

The message of Mormonism, the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, has now been before the world for over 140 years.

The first missionary

In June 1830, Samuel Harrison Smith trudged down a country road in New York State on the first official missionary journey of the restored church. He had been set apart by his brother, the Prophet Joseph. This great missionary traveled 25 miles that first day without disposing of a single copy of the new and strange book which he carried on his back. Seeking lodging for the night, faint and hungry, he was turned away, after briefly explaining his mission, with the words: "You liar, get out of my house. You shan't stay one minute with your books." Continuing his journey, discouraged and with heavy heart, he slept that first night under an apple tree.

So began, in the most inauspicious way, the missionary work of this dispensation through the restored church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

One hundred and forty-four years have come and gone since that first humble missionary set out to carry the message of salvation to a confused world. In fulfillment of the all-important, Godgiven mandate, this great work has gone forward through the years unabated. It is a dramatic chapter in the history of a "peculiar people." But in all the annals of Christendom there is no greater evidence of courage, willingness to sacrifice, and unbounded devotion to duty. Men, women, and children all have joined in this heroic effort with no hope of material reward.

Ambassadors of the Lord

These ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ, as they firmly believe themselves to be, have trudged through

mud and snow, swum rivers, and gone without the common necessities of food, shelter, and clothing in response to a call. Voluntarily fathers and sons have left homes, families, and jobs to go to all parts of the world, enduring great physical hardship and unrelenting persecution. Families have been left behind, often in dire straits, willingly laboring the harder to provide means for "their missionary." And through it all there has been a joy and satisfaction which has caused families at home to express gratitude for special blessings received and missionaries to refer to this period as "the happiest time of my life."

It has been conservatively estimated that between 140,000 and 150,000 full-time missionaries have served the Church since 1830, to say nothing of the thousands of local men and women who have performed valiant missionary services at home, numbering currently more than 20,000. These faithful emissaries, who have gone abroad, have expended from 98 to 105 million days of missionary effort at a cost, through loss of personal income and expense for living, of more than \$420 to \$450 million, and this does not include any costs of transportation to and from, or in the field, costs of administration at home or abroad, or expense of local missionary service.

Probably no group of people of comparable size in all the world has made such a free-will offering to the spreading of righteousness, and this from people who are not wealthy and who, in addition, are expected to contribute one-tenth of their interest annually to "the work of the Lord," according to the ancient-modern law of the tithe.

Willingness to sacrifice

Why? What is it that brings forth such sacrifice of time, means, and comforts and sweet associations of home?

Is it not the burning conviction that God has again revealed himself to man

on the earth, reestablished his church with all the gifts and blessings enjoyed in former days, and committed again to men his holy priesthood, with authority to exercise it for the blessings of his children? Yes, without doubt, it is the personal testimony of the divinity of this great latter-day work, faith in the commands of the Almighty, and our responsibility as his covenant children, the knowledge that God lives and loves his children, and the conviction that it is our mission to build and save men everywhere.

Preaching of the gospel

From the days of Father Adam to the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his successors, whenever the priesthood has been on the earth, a major responsibility has been the preaching of the saving, eternal principles of the gospel—the plan of salvation. Father Adam taught these things to his own children. (Moses 5:12.) Consider Noah's long years of missionary effort and the preachings of all the ancient prophets. (Moses 8:16-20.) Each in his day was commanded to carry the gospel message to the children of men and call them to repentance as the only means of escaping the pending judgments. The Master made crystal clear the great mission of his ancient apostles to "go ye therefore, and teach all nations. . . ." (Matt. 28:19.)

In the early visits of the resurrected Moroni to the Prophet Joseph Smith it was emphasized that the Prophet's name would be known for good or evil throughout the world and that the new volume of scripture and the restored gospel, which it contained, would have to be carried to the entire world "by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days." (D&C 1:4.)

More than a year before the Church was organized, the Lord revealed through the Prophet that "a marvelous work is about to come forth among

the children of men" and that the field was "white already to harvest. . . ." (D&C 4:1, 4) The early converts were charged with the burden of the responsibility as follows: "Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day." (D&C 4:2.)

Promises made to missionaries

Great promises were made to these early missionaries. They were told that "the worth of souls is great in the sight of God," and that if they "should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!" (D&C 18:10, 15.)

All these and many other glorious promises were made even before the Church was formally organized on April 6, 1830.

Following the organization, men and women were baptized and worthy brethren ordained to the priesthood and set apart to cry repentance and to deliver the message of the restored gospel. Even greater promises were embodied in the revelations which followed, many of which referred in no uncertain terms to the solemn responsibility resting upon the restored church to preach the word. In the fall of that same year came the word of the Lord through the Prophet as follows:

"For verily, verily, I say unto you that ye are called to lift up your voices as with the sound of a trumpet, to declare my gospel unto a crooked and perverse generation.

"For behold, the field is white already to harvest; and it is the eleventh hour, and the last time that I shall call laborers into my vineyard." (D&C 33:2-3.)

Preparation for second coming

The Lord made it plain to these

humble ambassadors that they were "preparing the way of the Lord for his second coming." (D&C 34:6.) They were promised that their words would be prompted by the power of the Holy Ghost and would be the will of the Lord and scripture unto the people, inasmuch as they were faithful. They were told in no uncertain terms that they were being sent "out to prove the world," that they should "not be weary in mind, neither darkened," and a hair of their head should "not fall to the ground unnoticed." (D&C 84:79-80.)

Is it any wonder, then, that with their personal testimonies that a new dispensation of the gospel was being opened; coupled with these stirring promises of the Lord, that they went forth in power and at great personal sacrifice, without monetary reward, even though their numbers were few and their circumstances poor. Add to this the fact that the heavenly pronouncements emphasized that this was the last time the gospel should be given to men as a witness in preparation for Christ's second coming and the end of the world—the end of wickedness. Theirs was the responsibility of warning the world of impending judgments, as it is ours today. They knew, as do we, that the Lord has said:

"For a desolating scourge shall go forth among the inhabitants of the earth, and shall continue to be poured out from time to time, if they repent not, until the earth is empty, and the inhabitants thereof are consumed away and utterly destroyed by the brightness of my coming.

"Behold, I tell you these things, even as I also told the people of the destruction of Jerusalem; and my word shall be verified at this time as it hath hitherto been verified." (D&C 5:19-20.)

Doctrine and Covenants Section 1

The time came, in late 1831, to consider the publication of the revelations

that the Lord had given to his church. By this time many revelations had been received and the Church had shown considerable growth in spite of persecution and drivings from the powers of evil. At the conference of elders the Lord revealed through the Prophet Joseph a great revelation addressed to the people of his church and "unto all men, and there is none to escape. . . ." (D&C 1:2.) No message heretofore given set forth in such clarity and power the worldwide nature of the message of the restored gospel. If there had been any question before, this left no room for doubt. Our message is a world message.

No person can read Section One of the Doctrine and Covenants, realizing that the Church accepts it as the word of the Lord, and ask why we send missionaries into all parts of the world. The responsibility, and a major one it is, falls squarely upon the membership of the Church, for "the voice of warning," says the Lord, "shall be unto *all people*, by the mouths of *my disciples*, whom I have chosen in these last days." (D&C 1:4. Italics added.) Then the Lord adds this great promise: "And they shall go forth and none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them." (D&C 1:5.) The revelation further states that all these things he has given unto his disciple-missionaries "to publish unto you, O inhabitants of the earth." (D&C 1:6.) After declaring that his voice is unto the ends of the earth, the Lord points out that he, "knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven. . . ." (D&C 1:17.) The same as in all other dispensations, a means of escape, revealed through a prophet, is provided. Then the Lord emphasizes that he is "willing to make these things known unto all flesh" for he is "no respecter of persons." (D&C 1:34-35.)

As a closing admonition he invites all his children to "search these commandments," which have been revealed

for the blessing of all mankind, because "they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled." (D&C 1:37.) Though heaven and earth pass away, his word he says, "shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same." (D&C 1:38.) Two days after receiving this great revelation from which I have quoted, the Lord said this to his church: "Send forth the elders of my church unto the nations which are afar off; unto the islands of the sea; send forth unto foreign lands; call upon all nations. . . ." (D&C 133:8.)

Spirit of missionary work

And so, as Latter-day Saints everywhere, with personal testimonies of these great events, we accept humbly, gratefully, this major responsibility placed upon the Church. We are happy to be engaged in a partnership with our Heavenly Father in the great work of the salvation and exaltation of his children. Willingly we give of our time and our means with which he may bless us to the establishment of his kingdom in the earth. This we know is our first duty and our great opportunity. This spirit has characterized the missionary work of the church of Jesus Christ in all ages. It has been an outstanding mark of the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times—our time. Where-

ever faithful Latter-day Saints are to be found, this spirit of unselfish sacrifice for the greatest cause in all the earth exists. In a statement published to the world during the last world war, the First Presidency of the Church declared: "No act of ours or of the Church must ever interfere with this God-given mandate." (*Conference Report*, April 1942, p. 91.)

In a word, we dedicate our all to the work of the Lord—the establishment and growth of his kingdom and the spread of righteousness. This is a major responsibility. President Kimball emphasized this great responsibility in an inspired address to Regional Representatives last Thursday. We accept gratefully the challenge and pray ever for the Lord's sustaining power as we go forward.

This great work is divine—directed by the Lord Jesus Christ through his church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To this I bear humble and grateful testimony in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Spencer W. Kimball

President Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder Henry D. Taylor, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve. He will be followed by Elder Hartman Rector, Jr., of the First Council of Seventy.