

Elder Delbert L. Stapley

of the Council of the Twelve

My beloved brothers and sisters, and friends of the radio and television listening audience: Prior to the birth of the Savior, many prophecies were given foretelling his coming to earth. The early prophets revealed the events which would precede his birth and described his earthly mission, thus enabling the people of the world to recognize him as their Savior, Lord, and God. Although the house of Israel possessed a written record of numerous prophecies concerning Christ's earthly life, still the Eternal Father sent a special messenger, John the Baptist, "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:17.)

Second coming of Christ

The predictions of the early prophets concerning Christ's birth, life, and ministry were fulfilled, and those who sincerely believed were prepared to accept and follow him. This being true, we can reliably expect that the happenings prophesied of concerning his second coming will also be fulfilled.

Toward the close of Christ's earthly ministry, his disciples, being concerned about his teachings of the end of the world, went to him "privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you." (Matt. 24:3-4.)

The Savior then explained to his disciples the signs and happenings which will occur prior to his second coming. These are recorded in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew and warrant careful study.

Jesus informed his disciples that iniquity shall abound; false Christs shall deceive many; false prophets shall arise, showing great signs and wonders to de-

ceive the very elect; and great tribulations shall prevail. There will be wars, rumors of wars, nations rising against nations, famines, pestilence, earthquakes, and the abomination of desolation as spoken of by Daniel the prophet.

The scriptural prophecies of the events that are to precede Christ's second coming serve as a guide and a warning to all inhabitants of the earth. Shouldn't we listen to these warnings as we witness the signs being fulfilled?

Preparing the way

As John the Baptist was sent prior to Christ's birth to prepare the way for his ministry, so did God send a prophet to usher in this last dispensation of his gospel in preparation for the second coming of our Savior. The Prophet Joseph Smith testified to a doubting world that Jesus is the Christ, the very Son of God.

Destructive forces

The Lord, in a latter-day revelation, reaffirmed the tribulations, desolations, calamities, and destructive forces of the last days. He warned:

"And in that day shall be heard of wars and rumors of wars, and the whole earth shall be in commotion. . . .

"And the love of men shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound. . . .

"Men standing in that generation . . . shall not pass until they shall see an overflowing scourge; for a desolating sickness shall cover the land. . . .

"And there shall be earthquakes . . . in divers places, and many desolations; yet men will harden their hearts against me, and they will take up the sword, one against another, and they will kill one another." (D&C 45:26-27, 31, 33.)

For many years there have been

wars somewhere in the world, and the constant rumors of wars are of great concern to many nations today. Nations are rising against nations.

There are unstable governments. Some have fallen. There is a continuing breakdown in the integrity, honesty, and righteousness of political, governmental, and business leaders.

The world is ripening in iniquity. There are many who have no compunctions against deceiving and leading people into the paths of darkness and sin.

There are those who falsely claim to be the Christ, or prophets, and by their cunning and deceit draw many followers.

Famine and pestilences persist. Earthquakes are increasing in number and intensity. The same is true of other disasters of nature.

Satan has great power over men, and, indeed, there are those who outwardly claim to be his disciples and worship him.

The world today is filled with men who have forsaken or forgotten God. They are seeking to change his laws by exercising their own mortal judgments. Perhaps to them God is not up-to-date. They forget that God's commandments are eternal and unchangeable. I ask this question: Is it possible for the *created* ever to be wiser than the *Creator*?

Our courts of justice are substituting man-made laws for God's laws and commandments. God is not dead. He remains the same forever—resolute, firm, unchanging, but full of love and compassion for his children.

Power of evil

The power of evil is opposed to the power of God. Satan currently wields great power in the affairs of men and of nations. If the leaders of nations follow their own course, misunderstandings and problems will increase, bringing even greater contention and strife.

The Lord instructed the Prophet Joseph Smith, "Prepare ye, prepare ye

for that which is to come, for the Lord is nigh." (D&C 1:12.)

In this last dispensation of his work, he cautioned, "Prepare yourselves for the great day of the Lord." (D&C 133:10.)

Let us be sure we thoroughly understand the most important things we can do to prepare ourselves for our Lord's second coming to earth and, by our obedience and faithfulness, escape his punishment.

Important considerations

The following are important considerations. We must set our lives and homes in order. This means a searching of our souls, an admittance of wrongdoing, and repentance where needed. It means keeping all of God's commandments. It means loving our neighbor. It means living an exemplary life. It means being good husbands and wives. It means teaching and training our children in the ways of righteousness. It means being honest in all our doings, in business and at home. It means spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to all the peoples of the world.

The Lord has said: "I will hasten my work in its time." (D&C 88:73.)

Urgency in work

There is an urgency in his work. Time is getting short. This sense of urgency in promoting the Lord's kingdom in these last days does not arise out of panic, but out of a desire to move swiftly and surely to establish and strengthen his kingdom among all people who are seeking the light and truth of the gospel, which is God's plan of life for all his children.

God will hasten his work by opening the heavens and sending heavenly messengers to his prophets to warn his children to prepare themselves to receive their Lord at his second coming.

The Christ has emphasized, "It is the eleventh hour, and the last time that

I shall call laborers into my vineyard." (D&C 33:3.)

In setting up his latter-day Church, the Savior has affirmed that this is the last time his kingdom shall be established upon the earth. (See D&C 27:13.)

This dispensation

The prophet Daniel, speaking of God's work in the last days, revealed that the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor left to another people, and it shall stand forever. (See Dan. 2:44.)

This dispensation of the gospel, then, is the last. The Lord has never indicated that his Church of the latter days would fail. God will ultimately triumph over all his enemies, including his archenemy, Satan. It will definitely benefit each of us to be on the Lord's side by keeping his laws and commandments. During these perilous last days, our responsibility to give warning to the world is vital. The Savior said:

"The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2.)

To meet this challenge of sending forth more labourers into his harvest of souls, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is calling an increased number of missionaries into all the world to preach the everlasting gospel of Christ to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

Be prepared

The Lord cautioned his people: "And again, verily I say unto you, the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and it overtaketh the world as a thief in the night." (D&C 106:4.)

Also he said: "For behold, the Lord God hath sent forth the angel crying through the midst of heaven, saying: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and

make his paths straight, for the hour of his coming is nigh." (D&C 133:17.)

How are we to meet the challenge of readying Church members and the peoples of the world for Christ's second coming and being sure they are prepared to receive him? Listen to this warning and counsel:

"And the arm of the Lord shall be revealed; and the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people;

"For they have strayed from mine ordinances, and have broken mine everlasting covenant;

"They seek *not* the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own God, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol." (D&C 1:14-16; italics added.)

Again He said: "What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word 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.)

Prophets, Apostles, and Teachers

The Lord has placed prophets, apostles, and teachers in his Church to interpret and point the way for his people in both spiritual and temporal matters. The rights, authority, and priesthood powers of these leaders stem from the Savior himself. Safety lies in following the counsel of divinely appointed leadership.

We in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are blessed to have a living prophet among us, President Spencer W. Kimball. I bear witness to his divine calling. He is my teacher, my leader, and my exemplar. I sustain and uphold him by my faith and prayers. I have complete and unwavering confi-

dence in his prophetic calling and divine leadership. His character is upright, his mind alert, his counsel wise, his judgment sound, his vision clear. He has a great love for all peoples. He is their friend and is considerate of their needs.

We will never go wrong as a people if we follow the Lord's prophet, who is also our prophet, and heed his teachings, counsel, and personal example.

The Savior gives this further knowledge of the last days:

Last days

"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

"Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. . . .

"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. . . .

"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall

come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." (Luke 21:25-28, 34, 36.)

Let us all, my brothers and sisters, discern prophecy's fulfillment, set in order our homes, and be prepared for this important day. And finally, let us meet the challenge to "make ready a people" for the Lord's second coming. I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Spencer W. Kimball

Elder Delbert L. Stapley of the Council of the Twelve has been our concluding speaker.

The singing for this session has been furnished by the Tabernacle Choir. We are grateful to these superb musicians for the spiritual tone their singing has brought to this meeting.

With Brother Donald H. Ripplinger conducting and Brother Alexander Schreiner at the organ, the Choir will sing in closing, "Almighty God of Our Fathers."

Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder J. Thomas Fyans, Assistant to the Twelve and supervisor of the Mexico-Central America area.

This conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 p.m. this afternoon.

The Choir sang the hymn, "Almighty God of Our Fathers."

Elder J. Thomas Fyans, Assistant to the Twelve, offered the benediction.

SECOND DAY AFTERNOON MEETING

FOURTH SESSION

The fourth session of the General Conference began at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 4, 1975.

President Spencer W. Kimball presided at this session and President Marion G. Romney, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted.

Music was provided by the