

Tuesday, April 6

Third Day

by Bishop Vaughn J. Featherstone, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

The BYU Combined Choirs sang, "The Morning Breaks."

The invocation was given by Bishop Vaughn J. Featherstone, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

President Spencer W. Kimball

The BYU Combined Choirs will now sing, "O Lord I Would Hear Thy Word."

Following the singing, Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the Council of the Twelve will be the first speaker.

The number, "O Lord I Would Hear Thy Word," was rendered by the BYU Combined Choirs.

President Kimball

Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the Council of the Twelve will be our first speaker. He will be followed by Elder William R. Bradford of the First Quorum of Seventy.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

Of the Council of the Twelve

We ponder and pray and speak continuously, here and everywhere, about the Lord our Redeemer—blessed be his name!—and about the salvation that is in him and in him only.

We testify of God and Christ

We teach and testify that salvation is in Christ. He is our Lord, our God, our King. We worship the Father in his name, as have all the holy prophets, and all the Saints of all ages.

We rejoice in him and in his atoning sacrifice. His name is above every name, and to him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord of all, without whom there would be neither immortality nor eternal life.

The Prophet Joseph Smith

But I shall now speak of another, of the one by whom the knowledge of Christ and of salvation has come in our

day, of the one who revealed those laws and truths relative to our blessed Lord which will enable all men to return to the Heavenly Presence and there receive that eternal life prepared for the faithful.

I shall speak of Joseph Smith, Jr., the mighty prophet of the restoration, the one who first heard the Heavenly Voice in this dispensation, the one through whose instrumentality the kingdom of God was once again established among men, so that the Great Jehovah might fulfil the covenants made of old, and prepare a people to dwell with him in righteousness on earth for a thousand years.

We all need the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit as we turn our attention to that prophet whose voice was the voice of the Lord to all of earth's inhabitants from his day onward. I pray that enlightenment from on high may now be poured out upon us in abundant measure.

Foreordained to greatness

As to this man, Joseph Smith, let us say—

Here is a man who was chosen before he was born, who was numbered with the noble and great in the councils of eternity before the foundations of this world were laid.

Along with Adam and Enoch and Noah and Abraham, he sat in council with the Gods when the plans were made to create an earth whereon the hosts of our Father's children might dwell.

Under the direction of the Holy One and of Michael, who became the first man, he participated in the creative enterprises of the Father.

In his premortal state he grew in light and knowledge and intelligence, attained a spiritual stature which few could equal, and was then foreordained to preside over the greatest of all gospel dispensations.

Here is a man who was called of God as were the prophets of old.

Born among mortals with the talents and spiritual capacity earned in preexistence, he was ready at the appointed time to perform the work to which he had been foreordained.

Heavenly messengers

In the spring of 1820 the Supreme Rulers of the universe rent the veil of darkness which for long ages had shrouded the earth. Choosing the time and the place and the person, they came down from their celestial home to a grove of trees near Palmyra, New York. Calling young Joseph by name, they then told him that pure and perfect religion was no longer found among men and that he would be the instrument in their hands of restoring the fulness of their everlasting gospel.

Thereafter, John, who baptized our Lord, and then Peter, James, and John. His presiding apostles, as angelic ministrants, came to the newly called

prophet and conferred upon him the same priesthoods held by them in their mortal ministries. These priesthoods are the power and authority of God, delegated to man on earth, to act in all things for the salvation of men.

Other heavenly visitants—Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Moses, Elijah, Elias—each came in turn, and each bestowed the keys, powers, rights, and prerogatives which they themselves possessed anciently. Joseph Smith thus became a legal administrator, called and commissioned from on high to represent the Lord, to be his mouthpiece, to preach his gospel, to administer his ordinances. His call was no vague and ill defined yearning to do good or teach truth, but the same literal appointment that came anciently to those to whom Jesus said: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you." (John 15:16.)

Here is a man who saw God and entertained angels.

As with Isaiah in the days of King Uzziah, and as with Moses and seventy of the elders of Israel, in the wilderness, so with Joseph Smith; he too saw the God of Israel. On the 3rd of April in 1836 in the Kirtland Temple, the Great Jehovah—appearing in glory, as when the sun shineth in his strength; and speaking with a voice that was as the sound of the rushing of great waters—testified of himself in these words:

"I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father." (D&C 110:4.)

Moroni—"an holy angel, whose countenance was as lightning, and whose garments were pure and white above all other whiteness" (D&C 20:6)—among others, made numerous appearances in connection with the coming forth of the inspired writings of the ancient inhabitants of the Americas.

Revelations and visions

Here is a man to whom the heavens

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were an open book, who received revelations, saw visions, and understood the deep and hidden mysteries of the kingdom by the power of the Holy Ghost.

During that Pentecostal period when there was such an outpouring of divine grace in Kirtland, Joseph Smith saw "the celestial kingdom of God, and the glory thereof." He "saw the transcendent beauty of the gate through which the heirs of that kingdom will enter, which was like unto circling flames of fire; also the blazing throne of God, whereon was seated the Father and the Son." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 107.)

His vision of the degrees of glory is the most complete and wondrous account of that which is beyond the veil which has come to us from the pen of any prophet. His numerous revelations, given in the name of the Lord, set forth the wonders of eternity and the glories of the gospel as plainly and persuasively as do those of the apostles and prophets of old.

Scripture

Here is a man who has given to our present world more holy scripture than any single prophet who ever lived; indeed, he has preserved for us more of the mind and will and voice of the Lord than the total of the dozen most prolific prophetic penmen of the past.

He translated the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God, which book is comparable to the Bible itself; is an account of God's dealings with the ancient inhabitants of the American world; and contains the fulness of the everlasting gospel.

He received and published to the world many visions and revelations, which set forth the hand dealings of Deity with his people in our day. About 250 pages of these are in the book of Doctrine and Covenants; others are available in the *History of the Church*.

He revised and added to the King

James Version of the Bible by the spirit of inspiration, doing more to perfect that volume of holy writ and to return it to its state of pristine perfection than any single person has ever done. Much of what he did in this respect is now published in the Pearl of Great Price.

Miracles

His sayings and doings, his goings and comings, the details of his daily life, are well-known. His journal, covering primarily the period from the organization of the Church in Fayette to his death in Carthage, is now published by the Church in six volumes totaling 3,295 pages.

Here is a man who, like the Master, whose servant he was, cast out devils and healed the sick.

In the same month in which the Church was organized, Newell Knight was possessed by an evil spirit. So severe and agonizing were the circumstances that the afflicted believer's "visage was distorted, and his limbs were twisted out of shape in a frightful manner," and "he was caught up from the floor and tossed about the room." The Prophet "rebuked the evil spirit in the name of Jesus Christ and commanded him to depart." Brother Knight then "saw the evil spirit leave him and vanish from his sight." Then all was peace. (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History*, Deseret Book Co., 1969, pp. 95-96.)

Jesus in Cana of Galilee performed his first miracle by turning water into wine. Joseph performed his in Colesville, New York, when the priesthood of God bade the demon from hell to depart from an ill-gotten habitat.

On July 22, 1839, in Commerce (now Nauvoo), Illinois, and in Montrose, Iowa, the Prophet went from house to house healing one after another of the sick and suffering Saints. Among those healed were Brigham Young and several of the Twelve. To one man who was at death's door, the

man of God said, "Brother Fordham, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to arise from this bed and be made whole." Wilford Woodruff, who was present, said, "His voice was like the voice of God, and not of man. It seemed as though the house shook to its foundations. Brother Fordham arose from his bed and was immediately made well." (*Essentials in Church History*, p. 270.)

Persecuted and martyred

Here is a man who was persecuted, hounded, driven, and finally slain for the witness he bore and the testimony of Jesus that was his.

He was tarred and feathered, beaten, driven, hated, cast out, "persecuted for righteousness' sake." (Matt. 5:10.) He spent months in the vile prisons of his day and was the victim of scores of false and malicious prosecutions. Once he and a small group of associates were prisoners of a mob-militia. On November 1, 1838, a pretended court martial—which ranks in infamy and illegality with the trial of Jesus before Pilate—sentenced the group to death. The order given was as follows:

"Brigadier General Doniphan:

"Sir:—You will take Joseph Smith and the other prisoners into the public square at Far West, and shoot them at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning."

"[Signed] Samuel D. Lucas,"

"Major General Commanding."

General Doniphan defied his commanding officer. With a boldness born of indignant justice he replied:

"It is cold blooded murder. I will not obey your order. My brigade shall march for Liberty tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock; and if you execute these men,

I will hold you responsible before an earthly tribunal, so help me God."

"[Signed] A. W. Doniphan,"

"Brigadier General."

(*Essentials*, p. 241.)

But finally, in the providences of Him whose witness the Prophet was and in the wisdom of Him who had said aforetime to Joseph Smith, "Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less" (D&C 122:9)—all according to the divine plan—Joseph Smith, the Prophet, and Hyrum Smith, the Patriarch, were called upon to die the death of martyrs.

The last words of the martyred seer were "O Lord, my God" (*Essentials*, p. 383), which he spoke as his spirit entered that sphere where the righteous are free from the persecutions of the ungodly, and where, mingling with just men made perfect through the blood of Him whose witnesses they were, they find perfect joy and peace at last.

A witness for Christ

Here is a man whose greatness lies in the fact that he was a witness of that same Lord for whom his fellow prophets in days long past had laid down their lives.

"And now, after the many testimonies that have been given of him," he said, "this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father." (D&C 76:22-23.)

A true prophet

Here is a man who was a prophet in the full and complete and literal sense of the word, as all who hearken to the voice of the Spirit shall know.

The divinely approved declaration, issued following his martyrdom says, "Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of

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the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it." (D&C 135:3.)

Here are the words of Deity, spoken to Joseph Smith, by which all men can judge the state of their own spiritual development:

"The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name, and fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage against thee;

"While the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under thy hand." (D&C 122:1-2.)

All men may well ask themselves where they stand with reference to Joseph Smith and his divine mission. Do they inquire after his name and seek that salvation found only in the gospel of Christ as revealed to his latter-day prophet, or do they deride and despise the Lord's living oracles and say that God no longer speaks to men in the way he did anciently? The great question which all men in our day must answer—and that at the peril of their own salvation—is: Was Joseph Smith called of God?

As for me and my house, we shall seek counsel and authority and blessing constantly from him and from those who now wear his prophetic mantle.

Jesus Christ

Now, let there be no misunder-

standing. We are witnesses of Christ. He is our Savior. He is the door. He stands at the gate; "and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name." (2 Ne. 9:41.)

Joseph Smith: God's prophet

But we are also witnesses of Joseph Smith, by whom we know of Christ, and who is the legal administrator to whom power was given to bind on earth and seal in heaven, that all men from his day forward might be heirs of salvation.

We link the names of Jesus Christ and Joseph Smith in our testimonies. And we now testify, as God is our witness, that Joseph Smith is his prophet, and we do it in the blessed name of Him who is Lord of all and of whom we and all the prophets testify, who is Jesus Christ. Even so. Amen.

President Spencer W. Kimball

Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just addressed us.

We shall now hear from Elder William R. Bradford of the First Quorum of Seventy, who is the president of the Chile Santiago Mission. He will be followed by Elder George P. Lee of the First Quorum of Seventy.

Elder William R. Bradford

Of the First Quorum of the Seventy

I commend unto you all these great men who have radiated the brilliant light of the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ during the proceedings of this conference. The truth that has been

shown forth here during these proceedings of this conference should gladden the hearts and calm the souls of all those who will set their course in life by it, that they might travel in perfect