

## Testimony

Nearly thirty years ago, in response to my earnest study and fervent prayer, the Holy Spirit confirmed to me the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of each individual soul. From that conviction, and by that same Spirit, has followed the knowledge that his gospel is eternally true, that it has been restored to the earth, that the scriptures—which I love—including the Book of Mormon, are divine records, that Joseph Smith and his successors, including Spencer W. Kimball, are prophets of God, and that our Heavenly Father loves us indi-

vidually. For this knowledge I give thanks and leave you my personal witness that these things are true, in the name of our beloved Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

---

## President Marion G. Romney

Elder Ronald E. Poelman, a new member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has just addressed us.

President Ezra Taft Benson of the Quorum of the Twelve will be our concluding speaker.

---

## President Ezra Taft Benson

Of the Council of the Twelve

While on a recent visit to continental Europe and Scandinavia, I had occasion to hold several press conferences with foreign news reporters. These reporters were somewhat informed and appeared amazed about the Church's growth and progress as measured by the increase of converts. I said to them, "We're grateful for this rapid growth in numbers. But we are even more grateful for the growth in faith and spirituality." I then quoted some statistics in support of that statement. When I first came into the Council of the Twelve in 1943, I said, the average attendance at sacrament meeting—our Sunday preaching service—was about 20 percent. Today worldwide attendance is about 41 percent. Youth attendance is 46 percent, and attendance in the Primary—our young children—is 67 percent. The growth, progress, and increased spirituality of the members of the Church is not just accidental, I said to them. It is the result of a rich program based on eternal truth.

Jesus told the original Twelve that

this would be one of the signs of the times. He said:

"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (Matt. 24:14.)

## Message of the Restoration

Today The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is extending the heralded message of the restoration of the gospel to every nation which permits us entrance through its borders. This is a fulfillment of the vision and revelation received by Daniel, the prophet, "Who foresaw and foretold the establishment of the kingdom of God in the latter days, never again to be destroyed nor given to other people." (Joseph F. Smith—Vision of the Redemption of the Dead 1:44.) He likened the beginning of this kingdom to a small stone cut out of a mountain without human hands but which rolled forward to become a great mountain until it filled the entire earth. (See Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45.)

This interpretation was validated by the Lord to the Prophet Joseph Smith by modern revelation in these words:

"The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth." (D&C 65:2.)

This is the heaven-decreed destiny of this church and kingdom.

Not all men will perceive the hand of God in this latter-day work. Jesus told Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3.) Without the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, there will be some who will see nothing more to the progress of the Church than a social curiosity.

### Prophetic warnings

We may expect to see the righteousness of the Saints and the progress of the kingdom of God continue unabated, but it will not be without opposition. The Council of the Twelve proclaimed in 1845: "As this work progresses in its onward course, and becomes more and more an object of political and religious interest... no king, ruler, or subject, no community or individual, will stand *neutral*. All will... be influenced by one spirit or the other; and will take sides either for or against the kingdom of God." (James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 5 vols., Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-70), 1:257.)

Yes, as the Lord declared, "Zion *must* increase in beauty, and in holiness; her borders *must* be enlarged; her stakes *must* be strengthened." (D&C 82:14; italics added.) As righteousness will increase, so will evil. We see evidences of this all about us. It sometimes causes members of the Church to despair. We may be assured, however, that the Lord will take care of this in His

own time and in His own way. Hear His decree:

"I, the Lord, am angry with the wicked. . . .

"I have sworn in my wrath, and decreed wars upon the face of the earth, and the wicked shall slay the wicked, and fear shall come upon every man;

"*And the saints also shall hardly escape; nevertheless, I, the Lord, am with them, and will come down in heaven from the presence of my Father and consume the wicked with unquenchable fire.*" (D&C 63:32-34; italics added.)

We may not be too far from the day prophesied by Heber C. Kimball, grandfather of President Spencer W. Kimball and member of the First Presidency. He said:

"The Saints will be put to tests that will try the integrity of the best of them. The pressure will become so great that the more righteous among them will cry unto the Lord day and night until deliverance comes. ("Prophecy of Heber C. Kimball," *Deseret News*, Church Section, May 23, 1931, p. 3.)

But remember the Lord has said in modern revelation, "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear." (D&C 38:30.) Are we prepared? God help us to be so for the tests of the days ahead.

### The Church stands for righteousness

With these prophetic warnings and assurances before us and evidences of evil increasing, Church members are asking: "Why is not the Church doing more to expose the evils of our society?" "Is there a great conspiracy?" "What can I do to fight false philosophies which have crept into our school systems and society in general?" "With the precarious political and economic conditions, should I prepare my sons and daughters for college and future careers?" "Is the Church the only answer to the problems about us, or are there other things we should be doing?"

It is easy to despair when we see about us the moorings of society slipping. We must remember, however, that

the Lord sent His Saints into the world "to be a light unto the world, and to be the saviors of men," (D&C 103:9.) This is a time when "Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments." (D&C 82:14.) The contrast between the Church and the world will be increasingly marked in the future, which contrast, we hope, will cause the Church to be more attractive to those in the world who desire to live according to God's plan for us, His children.

The Church will always stand for that which is honest, virtuous, true and praiseworthy. Such a pronounced stand for righteousness constitutes a repudiation *against* every evil and all false philosophies. The First Presidency and the Twelve are not oblivious to false philosophies and evils and will continue to warn the world and the Saints as the Lord directs.

Yes, there is a conspiracy of evil. The source of it all is Satan and his hosts. He has a great power over men to "lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken" to the voice of the Lord. (Moses 4:4.) His evil influence may be manifest through governments; through false educational, political, economic, religious, and social philosophies; through secret societies and organizations; and through myriads of other forms. His power and influence are so great that, if possible, he would deceive the very elect. As the second coming of the Lord approaches, Satan's work will intensify through numerous insidious deceptions.

### Responsibilities of heads of families

Parents also need to take a stand for all that is honest, virtuous, and praiseworthy. It is the responsibility of heads of families to support wholesome influences for their children in government, schools, in the home, in the neighborhoods, in stores, in local theaters. Parents have responsibility to see that freedom is preserved for their children, and that the present generation does not burden future generations with

debt and wasteful extravagance. The gospel, the kingdom of God, can prosper only in an atmosphere of freedom. Every adult has responsibility in selecting government leadership, for as the Lord has said, "I, the Lord God, make you free, therefore ye are free indeed; . . . Nevertheless, when the wicked rule the people mourn. Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently." (D&C 98:8-10.)

There is an urgent need for the development of a more firm and virtuous influence in the public affairs of each community, each state or province, and nations as a whole. A force for positive good is needed in every facet of public life.

Too many heads of families are not involving themselves in the affairs of their communities on the ground that they have not received specific instructions from Church leaders. The Lord, however, has declared:

"It is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant. . . .

"Men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

"For the power is in them. . . . And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward." (D&C 58:26-28.)

Joseph Smith, the prophet of this dispensation, declared: "It is our duty to concentrate all our influence to make popular that which is sound and good and unpopular that which is unsound." (*History of the Church*, 5:286.)

We must ask ourselves: Are we doing all we can to actively participate in the preservation of our freedom in building an influence for positive good and resisting the flood of evil which threatens to inundate the whole human family?

A major responsibility of family heads is to help prepare youth for the future. Gospel principles may be in-

stilled through effective family home evenings where youth will be fortified so that they have no need to fear for their future. Such teaching must be done in faith, testimony, and optimism.

### Mission of the Church

The Church's mission is to declare the gospel of the kingdom to all the world, to redeem our kindred dead, and to perfect the Saints of the Church—a positive approach. Never in the history of the Church has there been such an expenditure of time, planning, and resources to accomplish this mission. In the final analysis, this effort is the *only* solution to the problems of the world.

When Jesus stood before Pilate, the Roman governor asked him whether or not He was a king. It was a political question. The Savior replied: "My kingdom is not of this world." (John 18:36.) His answer is apropos today: The work of His kingdom is preeminently spiritual. The economic, political, and social problems facing this nation, as well as other nations, will be solved only with the help of God.

### Righteous will be prepared

The days ahead will be sobering and will test the faith of the Saints. But we may obtain strength from the Lord's assurances found in modern revelation. I quote:

"He will preserve the righteous by his power. . . . Wherefore, the righteous need not fear; . . . they shall be saved, even if it so be . . . by fire." (1 Ne. 22:17.)

"I will fight your battles." (D&C 105:14.) "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; . . . This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord." (3 Ne. 22:17.)

"Great tribulations shall be among the children of men, *but my people will I preserve.*" (Moses 7:61; italics added.)

The kingdom of God will not fail; it shall not be destroyed; it will not be left to other people; it will stand forever

until "the kingdoms of this world [will] become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ." (Rev. 11:15.)

Hear the prophecy of the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done." (HC, 4:540.)

Christian denominations the world over have prayed for centuries for the kingdom of God to come. We earnestly and publicly declare: that day is now here!

To Latter-day Saints the world over, we say: Let not your hearts be troubled. Keep the commandments of God. Follow the counsel of his living prophet, taking care not to exceed the counsel with your own private views. Teach your children to walk uprightly before the Lord. Pray in your homes morning and evening. Pray for civil magistrates and leaders even when you do not agree with them. Pray for the leaders of the Church. Pray, as you have been counseled, that the doors of nations of the world will be opened to the preaching of the gospel. Obey the laws of your country; rebel not against civil authority. Do your duty as citizens. "Do not yield to the bad, but always oppose it with good." (Virgil.)

### Seek first the Kingdom of God

To all who have allegiance to the kingdom of God, we say: "Seek ye . . . first the kingdom of God." (Matt. 6:33.)

"Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations; And that the gathering together upon the land of Zion, and upon her stakes, may be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall

be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth." (D&C 115:5-6.)

Yes, "Call upon the Lord, that his kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants thereof may receive it, and be prepared for the days to come, in the which the Son of Man shall come down in heaven, clothed in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth.

"Wherefore, may the kingdom of God go forth, that the kingdom of heaven may come." (D&C 65:5-6.)

I bear humble witness that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the restored kingdom of God on earth today. Its message and blessings are for all of our Father's children. It is the truth, to which I bear grateful testimony in the sacred name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

---

### President Marion G. Romney

President Ezra Taft Benson of the Quorum of the Twelve has been our concluding speaker.

We remind the brethren of the General Priesthood Meeting which will convene here in the Tabernacle this evening at 7 P.M.

The Sunday Morning Session will be broadcast by many radio and television stations in the Western United States and Canada, and by way of

oceanic cable to members assembled in 104 chapels in England, France, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, and Austria.

KSL Radio and KIRO Radio at Seattle will rebroadcast sessions over extensive distances, beginning at midnight following each conference day's proceedings.

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.

The singing for this session has been furnished by the Primary children's choir from the Bonneville, Granite, Millcreek, and Sugarhouse regions. We are thankful for the presence of you Primary children and appreciate the sweet spirit your music has given to this meeting.

The Choir will now sing in closing, "My Heavenly Father Loves Me," and "I Want to Live the Gospel."

Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder M. Russell Ballard, Jr., of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

---

The Choir sang the numbers, "My Heavenly Father Loves Me," and "I Want to Live the Gospel."

The benediction was given by Elder M. Russell Ballard, Jr.

## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD MEETING

### THIRD SESSION

The General Priesthood Meeting convened in the Tabernacle at 7:00 P.M. on Saturday, April 1, 1978. President Spencer W. Kimball presided at this session and President N. Eldon Tanner, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted.

The music for this session was furnished by a Prospective Elders' Choir from regions in the Salt Lake Valley, directed by Brother Paul A. Hanks with Brother Roy Darley at the organ.

President Tanner opened this session with the following remarks: