

providing for the present and future needs of your family? Are you getting out of debt? What is your relationship with the Savior? Do you pray? Do you read the scriptures? Do you pay your tithing? Do you fight with your neighbors? or your wife? or your children?

We can ask some special questions of leaders of the Church. It would be a disgrace to criticize you, knowing of your devotion and sacrifice, but let me ask you, Are you really listening to what the prophet says? We know that some of you do more than others. It is five years now since he said that every boy should go on a mission (see *ENSIGN*, May 1974, p. 87). Why are half of them still at home? Quorum presidents and home teachers, Why are there still so many diseased and sick in spirit? Why have you not "bound up that which was broken, neither . . . brought again that which was driven away, neither . . . sought that which was lost" (Ezek. 34:4)? The Lord has called you through his prophet. Listen to what he says. How you listen to the prophet makes the difference between being a Laman or Lemuel or a Nephi. There are some Lamans in the priesthood of the Church.

Elder Mark E. Petersen

After one of his journeys in Palestine, Jesus came to his own city and taught in the synagogue on the Sabbath day.

Those who heard him were astonished at his doctrine, but they were also offended. He had been their neighbor, and they resented his assuming to teach them. They said:

"Is not this the carpenter, the

President Kimball: the prophet

To all of you of whom I have made mention—unbelievers; non-members; members of the Church, both faithful and those not so devoted; and to the leaders; and all who bear the holy priesthood—I declare as one who knows and has authority, that Spencer W. Kimball, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is the prophet of God to all the inhabitants of the earth. He is the direct successor to Isaiah; Malachi; Peter, James, and John; and to Joseph Smith and others in between. He is the chief Apostle of Jesus Christ on the earth and is authorized to announce that the gospel has been restored to the earth in these, the last days, in preparation for the Second Coming and that these are the days to prepare. His is a voice of gladness in the glorious news he bears and a solemn warning to us all. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder W. Grant Bangerter, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has just spoken to us.

Elder Mark E. Petersen, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?" (Mark 6:3).

Jesus was grieved at their rejection of him and "marvelled because of their unbelief" (Mark 6:6). It was then that he said, "A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own

kin, and in his own house" (Mark 6:4).

Jerusalem rejects Christ

But he was rebuffed not only in Nazareth. By the end of his ministry, it seemed that nearly the whole country had turned against him.

As he contemplated his rejection in Jerusalem, he looked down upon the city and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt. 23:37).

And then he foretold the result of their rejection—a tragic consequence which they would bring upon themselves. He said, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:38).

Fruits of rebellion

And what a desolation it was! As the Roman legions swept through the Holy Land only a few years later and wiped out Jerusalem, it was such a catastrophe that it fully reflected the Savior's prediction when he said, "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matt. 24:21).

As Josephus describes it in his writings, it is dreadful to contemplate, even after almost two thousand years.

Repeatedly, generation after generation, Israel had turned to the gods of their neighbors as they also rejected the prophets. And desolation came upon them because of it just as it came upon their descendants who rejected Christ in his day. All twelve tribes were taken into slavery. Two returned but became subjects of Rome. The ten tribes were lost to the world. The fruits of rebellion indeed were desolation.

Cannot fight God and live

And what is the lesson in all of this? It is that no people can fight God and live! Every nation will feel a chastening hand if it turns its back upon the Ruler of Heaven and violates his eternal precepts.

Modern world rejects Christ

As I study these things in holy writ, I think of us who live today. Are we in the same category as those ancients? Does our modern world accept or reject Jesus Christ? And if we reject him, does the prospect of desolation concern us?

Do the so-called Christian nations really obey him? Or by their crimes and corruption do they essentially deny him while giving him lip service?

He despises lip service! No one objects more strenuously to hypocrisy than does the Almighty. And so, do our Christian nations really accept and obey him? What is the evidence?

The world no longer honors his sacred Sabbath. Violation is seen on all sides. The true meaning of chastity has been almost obliterated. Dishonesty is a way of life with millions.

Even in the churches his holy ordinances have been changed or eliminated. Divine authority is lost. Creeds reflect the teachings of men. The divine sonship of Christ is challenged, as is his virgin birth. Many no longer believe in his resurrection.

Then can this present world truthfully say that it accepts Jesus Christ? Must he not marvel at the unbelief of today as he did in ancient Nazareth?

Would not the Apostle Paul marvel at the many divisions in modern Christianity in the face of his declaration that Christ is not divided but that Christians should all speak the same thing and that there should

be no divisions among them? Did he not say that Christians should be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment and not divide into separate groups? (See 1 Cor. 1.)

Are not the divisions in Christianity and the turmoil within Christian nations evidence of their departure from Christ?

And what about ourselves? What about those of us who are members of this church? How devoted are we to the cause of Christ? Is there any evidence of rejection of him on our part? If we fail to obey him, do we reject him?

Importance of sacrament

As we receive baptism, we enter a covenant to serve God. As we partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we again enter into covenants to serve him, to keep his commandments, and to always remember him.

In the sacrament we seal our covenant by partaking of the sacred emblems of the Crucifixion. Literally, then, as we partake, do we not pledge to keep each and every commandment, and do we not confirm that pledge by eating of the broken bread and drinking from the cup?

What does the broken bread represent? The torn flesh of Christ!

What does the cup represent? His blood shed on the cross in the midst of suffering of infinite proportions, suffering which made himself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain and to bleed at every pore and suffer both in body and spirit (see D&C 19:18).

The Atonement was the most important thing that has ever happened. It is by virtue of the Atonement that we pledge obedience to our Father in Heaven. We promise not only to live the gospel in a general way, but specifically to keep the individual commandments.

As we take the broken bread, for example, do we not say to God that by this sacred emblem which we eat, we agree to keep the Sabbath day holy?

Other covenants

Or, do we not affirm before heaven that we here and now pledge to pay a full tithing, as another example, and seal our promise by partaking of the sacrament?

Do our covenants have such a specific meaning? I ask you, could they mean anything less?

We are under covenant to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, and to observe his holy ordinances. Such obedience must include chastity, sobriety, integrity, honesty, purity, charity, temperance, faithfulness, diligence in his service, brotherly kindness, patience, and devotion. And it must include a full acceptance of his prescribed ordinances.

Obedience shows love

It is by obedience to his commandments that we prove our love for him. Did he not say, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15)? And he made it abundantly clear that if we obey not, we love not.

Now I ask you, how different are we Latter-day Saints from the rest of the world?

And I ask you most earnestly, do most modern people live in a state of rejection of Christ, since most of them do not serve him? Does our modern world risk the same kind of desolation that came upon the ancient world—and for the same reason?

But he is merciful. Although he was despised in his day, Jesus still held out love and forgiveness to all, even to his enemies, if they would repent.

It was in this sense that he spoke to them and said, "O

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, . . . and ye would not!" (Matt. 23:37).

As I study his words, I ask myself if the Lord would speak to modern peoples in the same compassionate way, and I feel that he would, since he is no respecter of persons (see D&C 1:35).

Do you suppose that he might now say, "O America, America, how often would I gather your children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing"?

Or, might he say, "O England, O England, how often would I gather your children together"?

Or, "O Germany," or Scandinavia, or any other people on earth, "How often would I gather your children together"?

If we reject him in this modern age, can it be less serious than was the apostasy of ancient Israel when they turned to idolatry?

"Trifle not with sacred things"

It is no trivial thing to reject Almighty God, either by a show of indifference or with malice aforethought. The divine words still echo in our ears: "Trifle not with sacred things" (D&C 6:12).

His commandments are clearly set forth. His standards of morality, honesty, and the other virtues are well known. But sadly enough, they are noted more for their rejection than for their acceptance. Does this mean that desolation might come upon us in some form?

Why should legislatures condone immorality, whether homosexual or otherwise? Why should officers of state condone vice and even protect it? Why should lawmakers—why should the courts—oppose prayer and reading of the scriptures, doing so in the name of the constitution of this land, where we daily affirm, "In

God is our trust" ("Oh Say, Can You See," *Hymns*, no. 131)?

Are they for Christ or against him in this Christian land? Can there be any neutrality with respect to God? Christ says no! We are either for him or against him (see Matt. 12:30).

Why should legislatures favor a wholesale violation of the Sabbath day and defeat Sunday closing laws? Why should so-called Christian peoples put up with it?

Almost like children, we fret over our fuel shortages and other inconveniences. We resent restrictions upon our pleasure-seeking activities. Why don't we admit like grown men and women that a rejection of God is at the very root of all of our troubles? Why do we refuse to wake up to the facts in our situation? Why must we blindly plunge on into catastrophe?

Should we not take right and proper steps to overcome our conflicts, our crimes, and all of our corruptions?

Return to God

There is but one sure and certain way: *return to God!* And that must include a sincere acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ, with full obedience to his precepts.

What would he do even now for America if this nation would truly accept him! What would he do for England, for Mexico, for Scandinavia, for Germany, for the Orient, for South America, and for all peoples if they would turn to him, repent of their transgressions, and accept his divine invitation!

He says:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

Think of the burden of war and the cost of munitions to preserve the peace. Think of the burden of crime and of overwhelming debt, both private and public. Think of the heavy personal burdens we carry in this world.

The invitation of Christ

And then think what a relief it would be if we were free of them. This can come if we accept the invitation of Christ.

Compared to our present burdens, his is light indeed. His yoke is easy, and in the warmth of his divine soul he will welcome each repentant person. We need not fear him, for he is meek and lowly in heart.

Listen! Can you hear his call? He is saying even now, "O America, America, how often will I yet gather you—if you will but come."

"O England, O Scandinavia, O Mexico, O Germany, O Japan, O Korea, and all other lands." Can you hear? He is calling you—now, today. He will gather you even now, and nurture you and prosper you and give you peace—if you will but come to him in humility and repentance.

In this land we often sing "God Bless America." Let us continue to do so as a prayer. But why not also sing God bless England, and God bless Scandinavia, and God bless South America and Mexico and the Orient, and God bless Australia and New Zealand, and *God bless all other lands?* He will bless them—every one—if they will turn to him with full purpose of heart. But there is no other way.

He can end their wars, their internal conflicts, their poverty, their unemployment, and their need of doles. He can eliminate their crimes, their moral corruption, and all the diseases that follow in their wake.

He can give them peace—genuine peace—mentally, physically, spiritually, economically, and politically. But they must pay the price, which is sincere obedience to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why, in the name of common sense, can we not see it? Why in the name of reason do we not turn to him, readily and cheerfully? It is the only safe course.

A great reality

This is no meaningless rhetoric in which we engage here today. We speak of hard facts, of the realities of life.

There was a time in ancient America when such blessings came to this land and lasted for two hundred years. Peace and prosperity were everywhere. There were no wars, no crimes, no jails, no poverty, no moral corruption, and none of the diseases which sins produce—not for two hundred years.

This is no storybook tale. It was a great reality. It was a vital chapter in world history that came but has never been repeated. Yet it *can* be repeated now in our day, on the same terms.

The billions we spend on armaments could be directed to peaceful pursuits. The billions that are lost in crime could be diverted toward improving the human race. There would be no racial conflicts, no strikes, no boycotts or lockouts, no armies or navies, and no satellite spy operations.

It is all within our reach as a great physical reality. The price is far less than what we now pay, and the rewards are indescribably greater.

O Jerusalem! O America! O England, and all other countries! The Lord says to all, "Come unto me, . . . and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.