

nessed its power. I have seen its strength. I have marveled at the miracles it has wrought.

Authority of Aaronic Priesthood

Almost thirty years ago I knew a boy, even a priest, who held the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood. As the bishop, I was his quorum president. This boy, Robert, stuttered and stammered, void of control. Self-conscious, shy, fearful of himself and all others, he had an impediment of speech which was devastating to him. Never did he fulfill an assignment; never would he look another in the eye; always would he gaze downward. Then one day, through a set of unusual circumstances, he accepted an assignment to perform the priestly responsibility to baptize another.

I sat next to him in the baptistry of this sacred tabernacle. He was dressed in immaculate white, prepared for the ordinance he was to perform. I asked Robert how he felt. He gazed at the floor and stuttered almost incoherently that he felt terrible.

We both prayed fervently that he would be made equal to his task. Then the clerk read the words: "Nancy Ann McArthur will now be baptized by Robert Williams, a priest." Robert left my side, stepped into the font, took little Nancy by the hand, and helped her into that water which cleanses human lives and provides a spiritual rebirth. He then gazed as though toward heaven and, with his right arm to the square, repeated the words "Nancy Ann McArthur, having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you

in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (see D&C 20:73). Not once did he stammer. Not once did he stutter. Not once did he falter. A modern miracle had been witnessed.

In the dressing room, as I congratulated Robert, I expected to hear this same uninterrupted flow of speech. I was wrong. He gazed downward and stammered his reply of gratitude.

To each of you this day, I testify that when Robert acted in the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood, he spoke with power, with conviction, and with heavenly help.

Such is the legacy of one called John, even John the Baptist. We hear his voice today. It teaches humility; it prompts courage; it inspires faith.

May we be motivated by his message. May we be inspired by his mission. May we be lifted by his life to a full appreciation of the Aaronic Priesthood and its divine power. I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Following Elder Monson's remarks, the Choir sang "Praise Ye the Lord" without announcement.

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Thomas S. Monson, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us. He was followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Praise Ye the Lord."

Elder David B. Haight, also a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will be our next speaker.

Elder David B. Haight

I pray for divine direction and an interest in your faith and prayers as I

express the convictions of my soul this morning.

We are all so pleased to have President Kimball here looking so well and blessing us with his inspired counsel and direction. The world loves and honors our prophet, but the Saints love him even more.

This is a glorious time of the year, the newness of springtime—an opportunity for each of us to re-appraise our spiritual understanding and commitment, to rejoice in the glory of the resurrection of our Lord, and to feel of his anxious love for all mankind.

Lazarus resurrected

Probably nowhere did Jesus find more needed rest and happier hours than in Bethany in the quiet house of that family whom, according to John, he loved (see John 11:5). This small village with this very special family was just outside Jerusalem on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. The family evidently consisted of Martha, Mary, and their brother, Lazarus. This quiet village, though only two miles from Jerusalem, was completely hidden from the bustle of the crowds and must have fed the soul of Jesus with love and peace. He must have felt welcome to share this family's hospitality. They not only furnished comfort but listened in deep conviction to his words.

While Jesus was about his ministry he received a solemn message that he whom he loved was sick (see John 11:3). Lazarus was Jesus' intimate personal friend outside the circle of Apostles.

The scripture account tells us Jesus did not leave at once in response to the request because he was occupied with his important work, but he sent word that he would come.

Four days later when Jesus arrived at Bethany he stayed outside the little village, the record tells us,

inasmuch as a large number of people, including distinguished Jews, had assembled to comfort and mourn with Mary and Martha. The sisters undoubtedly were disappointed in the Savior's delay.

"Lord," said Martha, "if thou hadst been here my brother had not died" (John 11:21).

The Savior's brief reply undoubtedly brought comfort to Martha and rings out in hope to all the world: "Thy brother shall rise again" (John 11:23).

Martha, we assume not thinking it possible for her brother to be awakened from the sleep of death, answered, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (John 11:24).

Then "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:25-26).

Martha's deep faith supplied the answer, "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world" (John 11:27).

Martha, after having borne this strong witness, found Mary, who, hurrying to Jesus in agony as had Martha, said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (John 11:32).

These were his friends. These must have been moments of tender compassion for Jesus and, undoubtedly, of deep emotion and wonderment for all who witnessed. Jesus said, "Where have ye laid him?" They said, "Lord, come and see" (John 11:34).

His enemies, some of whom were there, were asking whether he who had opened the eyes of the blind could not have saved his friend from death. Jesus surely knew their

thoughts and would have heard their comments as he viewed the crowd with its hired mourners.

The burial tomb, typical of the time, probably was a recess cut in the rock with a stone over the entrance. Jesus asked that the stone be removed. He stood at the entrance and called, "Lazarus, come forth."

"And he that was dead came forth" (John 11:43-44).

There were many witnesses to this miracle who believed, but there were others who would carry an alarming story to the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem.

Jesus is betrayed

As Jesus' fame grew, so grew the opposition from the chief priests, apprehensive that he would undermine the established order. And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve Apostles aside and said unto them: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priest and unto the scribes; and they shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify him. On the third day he shall rise again" (see Mark 10:32-34).

In an upper room, Jesus and his Apostles were together for the last time. He taught them, saying, "Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me" (Matt. 26:21). As they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying: "Take, eat. This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me" (see Matt. 26:26; Luke 22:19). After this manner also he took the cup, saying, "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins," thus establishing the pattern for the sacrament as a sacred ordinance in his church (Matt. 26:28).

In Gethsemane Jesus knelt in prayer and poured out his soul. "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39).

"And being in agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as . . . great drops of blood falling . . . to the ground" (Luke 22:44).

The Crucifixion

Following his betrayal, and when the morning was come, the chief priests and his enemies took counsel against Jesus to put him to death, and they bound him and led him to Pontius Pilate, the governor, "and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified" (see Matt. 27:1-2, 26).

He was taken to Calvary. At the third hour, they crucified Jesus, and with him they crucified two thieves (see Mark 15:25, 27). "And there was . . . darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

". . . and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst" (Luke 23:44-45).

Christ is resurrected

After three days, very early in the morning on the first day of the week, the women came to the sepulcher with spices to anoint the body of Jesus. Instead, they were greeted by a young man in a long white garment who announced: "He is not here. He is risen" (see Luke 24:6). Jesus showed himself first to Mary Magdalene and afterward to the Apostles.

For forty days after his resurrection, Jesus remained with his disciples to instruct them more in the gospel. He told them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

And then "he led them out as far as . . . Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them," and "while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (Luke 24:50-51).

And "while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

"Which . . . said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go" (Acts 1:10-11).

Testimony of Christ's resurrection

We testify to all the world, as did the Apostles of old, that this same Jesus taken up into heaven as men watched, will return—will return in power and great glory, attended by the hosts of heaven. At that day "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" (Isa. 40:5). But prior to that day, as foretold by the prophets, there must be a restoration of all things in the last days, the fulness of the gospel with all its saving powers to be returned to earth (see Acts 3:20-21).

We proclaim with knowledge and power as witnesses of heavenly events that the final great restoration has taken place, that angelic ministers have been sent from heaven, that God's voice has been heard declaring its truth, that the gift of the Holy Ghost and the priesthood powers with blessings and promises have again been given to man.

Organization of the Church

Tomorrow, the day selected to remember the resurrection of our Lord, is an occasion of additional joy and humble thanksgiving. Not only the organization of Christ's church

was reinstated on that day 150 years ago, but the Lord has protected, sheltered, and prospered it through these challenging years. God has held it in the palm of his hand.

The Prophet Joseph Smith's account of the first organization meeting is inspiring to read and contemplate—the Whitmer home, the opening prayer, approval to organize the Church as commanded, Joseph and Oliver Cowdery ordained elders, the sacrament; and then all members present were blessed with the gift of the Holy Ghost. There was prophecy and rejoicing. The events of that April 6, 150 years ago, had been directed by God. Members used their full agency in consenting to the organization, and the Holy Ghost bore witness to their souls that what was done was acceptable to the Lord.

Then followed the trying and dramatic events of Kirtland, Zion's Camp march, Haun's Mill, Liberty Jail, the expulsion from Nauvoo, the tragedy at Carthage, Winter Quarters, handcart brigades, and Johnston's army—the testing of a people, the trials of faith, but always the undergirding faith and belief in our Savior and his promise to Joseph, "If thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes" (D&C 121:8).

Now today in this peaceful valley, in this historic tabernacle, we witness the fruits of God's love and promise to his people. We still sing with emotion, "All is well, all is well."

Tolstoy's view of Mormonism

The motivating force behind the sustaining and vigorous growth of the Church is that it is true. It is God's plan. The gospel provides the only way to a mortal life of happiness and a joy forever.

Count Leo Tolstoy, Russian author and statesman, in conversation

with Andrew D. White, United States foreign minister to Russia, in 1892 said, "I wish you would tell me about your American religion."

"We have no state church in America," replied Dr. White.

"I know that, but what about your American religion?"

Dr. White explained to Tolstoy that in America each person is free to belong to the particular church in which he is interested.

Tolstoy impatiently replied: "I know all of this, but I want to know about the *American* religion. . . . The church to which I refer originated in America and is commonly known as the Mormon Church. What can you tell me of the teachings of the Mormons?"

Dr. White said, "I know very little concerning them."

Then Count Leo Tolstoy rebuked the ambassador. "Dr. White, I am greatly surprised and disappointed that a man of your great learning and position should be so ignorant on this important subject. Their principles teach the people not only of heaven and its attendant glories, but how to live so that their social and economic relations with each other are placed on a sound basis. If the people follow the teachings of this church, nothing can stop their progress—it will be limitless."

Tolstoy continued, "There have been great movements started in the past but they have died or been modified before they reached maturity. If

Mormonism is able to endure, unmodified, until it reaches the third and fourth generation, it is destined to become the greatest power the world has ever known" (see *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1939, p. 94).

Greatest power in the world

It is not only destined to *become* but *is* the greatest power in the world. I thank God for his revelations to his prophets, past and present, and for not leaving us alone. I declare to you, my friends everywhere, my witness that God does live, that he made us in his own image, that he sent his divine Son, our Savior, to show us the way. I know that my Redeemer lives and pray that his blessings and peace may come to all men everywhere, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

The Choir and congregation will now join in singing "Redeemer of Israel." Following the singing, Elder James E. Faust, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will speak to us.

The Choir and congregation sang the hymn "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder James E. Faust

At the Samoa area conference in 1976, President Spencer W. Kimball said: "Often when we have press conferences, the press asks us this question: 'What is the greatest problem that your . . . Church has today?' We answer that it is rapid growth. It

is very difficult to keep up with the growth of the Church in many lands" (in Conference Report, Samoa Area Conference 1976, p. 9).

It has been 150 years since The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized. Why does this