

SECOND DAY MORNING MEETING

FOURTH SESSION

The fourth general session of the conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 4, 1981. President Marion G. Romney, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session with Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger directing and Robert Cundick at the organ.

Prior to the beginning of the session, the Choir sang "Come, We That Love the Lord" without announcement.

President Romney then made the following remarks:

President Marion G. Romney

We welcome all who are present this morning in the Salt Lake Tabernacle on Temple Square in this fourth session of the 151st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We also acknowledge those tuned to this conference by radio and television and those who are seated in the overflow congregation in the Salt Palace where Elders Paul H. Dunn and John H. Groberg preside.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, educa-

tion, and civic leaders, and officers and members of the Church from many lands who have assembled to worship and to counsel together in this conference.

The Tabernacle Choir under the direction of Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger with Robert Cundick at the organ is providing the music for this session. The Choir opened these services by singing "Come, We That Love the Lord" and will now sing "The Morning Breaks," following which Elder George P. Lee, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will offer the invocation.

The Choir sang "The Morning Breaks."

Elder George P. Lee offered the invocation.

The Choir rendered "Truth Eternal" without announcement.

President Romney

The Tabernacle Choir has sung "Truth Eternal." It will now be our privilege to hear from Elder Bruce R. McConkie, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

Will you join with me in considering these questions:

"We are the servants of the Lord"

If you had lived in Jerusalem in the days of Jesus, would you have accepted him as the Son of God as did

Peter and the Apostles? Or would you have said he had a devil and wrought miracles by the power of Beelzebub, as Annas and Caiaphas claimed?

If you had lived in Nazareth or Cana or Capernaum, would you have believed the new religion preached by a few simple fishermen? Or would you

have followed the traditions of your fathers in which there was no salvation?

If you had lived in Corinth or Ephesus or Rome, would you have believed the strange new gospel preached by Paul? Or would you have put your trust in the vagaries and traditions and forms of worship that then prevailed?

If you now live in New York or London or Paris, if you live in Chicago, Los Angeles, or Salt Lake—will you accept the new yet old religion, the new yet old gospel, the new yet old way of life that God has revealed anew for our day? Or will you sustain and support churches that no longer have any real resemblance to the one set up among the primitive Saints?

If you hear a prophetic voice, if an apostolic witness is borne in your presence, if the servants of the Lord give you a message from their Master—what is your reaction? Do you believe or disbelieve?

If you are told in words of soberness that Joseph Smith was called of God, that through him the fulness of the everlasting gospel has been restored, and that the Lord has established his church once again among men—do you believe the heaven-sent word? Or, like Annas and Caiaphas, do you stay with the status quo and trust your eternal salvation to the varying forms of man-made worship that abound on every hand?

With these questions before us, may I be so bold as to make this solemn declaration: We are the servants of the Lord, and he has given us a message to deliver to all men everywhere.

We are weak and simple and unlearned. Of ourselves we can do nothing, but in the strength of the Lord we cannot fail. It is his power that sustains and guides us.

We know what the future holds and of the wars and plagues and

desolations that will soon sweep the earth as a devouring fire.

This is a gloomy day of sorrow and sadness. The heavens gather blackness; men's hearts are failing them for fear (see Luke 21:26); nations are perplexed and know not where to turn to find peace and security.

This is a day in which mad men in high places can, in an instant, suddenly, unleash such fearful weapons that millions can be slain between the rising and the setting of the sun.

There has never been such a dire day as this. Iniquity abounds; all the perversions and evils of Sodom have their devotees. And the revealed word assures us that conditions will get worse, not better, until the coming of the Son of Man.

Message of the Restoration

It is because of the evils and ills which cover the earth, because men have strayed from the Lord's ordinances and broken his everlasting covenant, because many walk in the ways of the world and are carnal, sensual, and devilish that the Lord has given us a message to deliver to our fellowmen.

"Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth," he said, "called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments." (D&C 1:17.)

What then is our message for all men? It is the message of the Restoration. It is the glad tidings that a gracious God had restored the fulness of his everlasting gospel. It is the hallowed word that all men may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

Divine Sonship of Christ

The message of the Restoration includes three great truths, truths which must be accepted by all mankind if they are to save

themselves. These are, first, the divine Sonship of Christ; second, the divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith; and third, the truth and divinity of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

And so it is that the Lord has commanded us to declare glad tidings, to preach his gospel, to raise the warning voice, to say what he would say if he personally were ministering among men as he once did.

Our position and status and divine commission is no different than that of the prophets and Apostles of old. We also are the agents of the Lord, his ambassadors; we are, as were they, legal administrators who have power to bind on earth and have it sealed everlastingly in the heavens.

It is fashionable in some quarters to assert that Mormons are not Christians and to question our belief in and our allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ.

If being a Christian means believing in Christ and accepting him as the Son of God in the full and complete sense; if it means having the true gospel in its everlasting fulness; if it means believing what Peter and Paul believed and finding fellowship in the same Church to which they belonged; if it means feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, and loving our fellowmen, and keeping ourselves unspotted from the world (see D&C 59:9)—where else shall we find true Christians except among the Latter-day Saints?

Let me say as soberly, as plainly, and as clearly as the English tongue permits that we believe in Christ and strive with all our power to keep his commandments. He is our Lord, our God, and our King. It is his gospel we have received.

We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy in his name, and we know that his is the only name given under heaven whereby man can be saved. (See Acts 4:12.)

We teach and testify that he is the Firstborn of the Father, that he is the one like unto God, that he himself is the Lord Omnipotent, the great Jehovah, the Creator of this earth and of all forms of life.

We know that he is the God of Israel, the promised Messiah, the Only Begotten of the Father.

We know that the Lord Jesus made flesh his tabernacle, that Mary was his mother and God was his Father, and that he inherited from his mother the power of mortality and from his Father the power of immortality.

It was this dual nature, this mortal yet divine Sonship, that enabled him to work out the infinite and eternal Atonement and to ransom men from the temporal and spiritual deaths brought into the world by the fall of Adam.

Divine mission of Joseph Smith

It is also fashionable in some quarters to contend that we Mormons esteem the Prophet Joseph Smith so highly that even the Lord Jesus takes a secondary position.

It is true that Joseph Smith is one of a dozen or a score of those prophets who stand preeminent above all men in greatness and spiritual stature. It is true that his place in the heavenly hierarchy makes him a prophet of prophets and a seer of seers. He ranks with Enoch and Abraham and Moses. But salvation is in Christ, not in Abraham, not in Moses, not in Joseph Smith.

All of the prophets are servants of the Lord. Their ministry is to teach his word and do his will. They preach his gospel and perform his ordinances. Their mission is to bring souls unto Christ.

And so it is with Joseph Smith. He saw God; angels ministered unto him; the visions of eternity were open to his view. He is the one through

whom the gospel was restored, and to him the Lord gave the keys of the kingdom.

Truth and divinity of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

For this day, this age, this dispensation, Joseph Smith is the revealer of Christ and the knowledge of salvation. At the direction of the Lord, he organized the only true and living church on earth. (See D&C 1:30.)

The Church is an organized body of true believers; it is the congregation of those who have accepted the holy gospel; and the gospel is the plan of salvation. The higher priesthood administers the gospel; the Church is the vehicle through which the Lord's affairs on earth are regulated and through which salvation is made available to all who believe and obey.

And so it is that we, as the servants of the Lord, obedient to his command, carry his message to the world. We bear witness of Christ as he has been revealed anew by Joseph Smith, and we invite all men everywhere to believe his gospel and join his Church and become heirs of that kingdom where he and his Father dwell.

True believers rejoice in Christ and his gospel

As it was with the prophets of old in their ministries, so it is with us in ours. We say as they did: Repent and believe the gospel, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (See Matt. 3:2.) Forsake Babylon; flee to Zion; find refuge in one of her stakes. Stand in holy places, and prepare for the Second Coming of the Son of Man. (See D&C 45:32.)

Salvation comes to those who accept the true gospel and live its laws. It is for those who call upon the Lord in mighty prayer until he pours out his Spirit upon them.

It was Paul who said:

"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"

"And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom. 10:13-14.)

Truly "faith cometh by hearing" the word of God taught by a legal administrator who has been called of God. (Rom. 10:17.) And as it was anciently, so it is today—it pleases "God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1 Cor. 1:21.)

Our message is one of joy and rejoicing and glory and honor and triumph. True believers always rejoice in Christ and in his gospel.

We do not say that everyone who accepts the restored gospel will escape the wars and plagues and desolations of the last days. But we do say that all their sorrows and sufferings will be swallowed up in the joy of the gospel.

Some who are true and faithful will perish along with the wicked and ungodly in the days ahead. But what does it matter whether we live or die once we have found Christ and he has sealed us his?

If we lay down our lives in the cause of truth and righteousness or in defense of our religion, our families, and our free institutions, why should we worry?

We are not hanging on to life with greedy hands, fearful of the future. Once we have accepted the gospel and been reconciled to God through the mediation of Christ, what matters it if we are called to the realms of peace, there to await an inheritance in the resurrection of the just?

Having a hope in Christ, we know we shall rise in glorious immortality and find place with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God, to go no more out.

"Who will hear our message?"

Now, as Isaiah expressed it,

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” (Isa. 53:1.)

Who will believe our words, and who will hear our message? Who will honor the name of Joseph Smith and accept the gospel restored through his instrumentality?

We answer: the same people who would have believed the words of the Lord Jesus and the ancient Apostles and prophets had they lived in their day.

If you believe the words of Joseph Smith, you would have believed what Jesus and the ancients said.

If you reject Joseph Smith and his message, you would have rejected Peter and Paul and their message.

If you accept the prophets whom the Lord sends in your day, you also accept that Lord who sent them.

If you reject the restored gospel and find fault with the plan of salvation taught by those whom God hath sent in these last days, you would have rejected those same teachings as they fell from the lips of the prophets and Apostles of old.

I have spoken plainly of our obligation as the servants of the Lord to proclaim the message of the Restoration to the world. This we are now doing as far as our time and talents and means permit.

Man's obligation to seek the truth

But what of those to whom the message is sent? What of our Father's other children who have not yet accepted Christ and his gospel as they have been revealed by Joseph Smith? Does not every man on earth have personal obligation to seek the truth, to believe the truth, to live the truth?

We invite all men of all sects, parties, and denominations to ponder such questions as these:

Do I hunger and thirst after righteousness as did the Saints of old? (See Matt. 5:6.)

Do I have an open mind and a willingness to prove all things and hold fast to that which is good? (See 1 Thess. 5:21.)

Am I willing to receive new light and truth from heaven, light and truth that comes from a gracious God in whose sight a soul is just as precious now as it ever was?

Do I have the moral courage to learn whether Joseph Smith was called of God, whether he and his successors have the same keys of the kingdom of God that Peter, James, and John had anciently?

Am I willing to pay the price of investigation and gain a personal revelation that tells me what I must do to gain peace in this world and be an inheritor of eternal life in the world to come?

We testify that God has given to us his everlasting gospel, and we invite all men to come and partake of its blessings with us.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The Choir sang “O God, Our Help in Ages Past” without announcement.

President Romney

We have heard from Elder Bruce R. McConkie, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder William R. Bradford, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder Charles Didier, also a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.