

butions that go to bless that land, when I look at the homes that have been built because of the welfare program after their island was devastated because of a hurricane, my heart is filled with joy for a people who love the Lord, who are willing to give of their own means for the furthering of the kingdom of God.

God bless you, my dear brothers and sisters, as you go forth in this great work, that you will remember who you are and give freely and cheerfully of that which our Heavenly Father has given to you, that your testimony by your faith will bear witness to all the world that this work is true, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Benson

Elder Philip T. Sonntag, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has just addressed us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Shall the Youth of Zion Falter?," following which Elder John H. Groberg, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy will address us.

The choir and congregation sang "Shall the Youth of Zion Falter?"

Elder John H. Groberg spoke without further announcement.

Elder John H. Groberg

How I pray for the Spirit of the Lord to continue to be with all of us, as it has been thus far.

The injunction from God to "remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8) has been in force throughout human history. There is power in keeping the Sabbath day holy. I testify that God lives, that we are his children, that he loves us, and that he gives us commandments so he can bless us as we keep them and thereby have joy. As we keep the Sabbath day holy he will bless us, and we will achieve a quiet power for good as individuals, as families, and as nations, that we cannot obtain in any other way.

Let me give two examples:

Tonga—first to greet Sabbath

The small island kingdom of Tonga lies immediately next to the international date line, so it is the first country in the world to greet the Sabbath day. It is a small country and, in the counting of the world, a poor country. But years ago a wise Tongan king decreed that the Sabbath would be kept holy in Tonga forever.

Modern civilization has come in many ways to Tonga. If one goes to the capital of Nuku'alofa on a weekday, he finds the usual heavy traffic of trucks and cars and the bustle of thousands of shoppers making their regular purchases from well-stocked stores and markets. One sees people line up to view the latest movies and to rent videos. One can watch modern buses whisk tourists off to catch their jet planes, or observe the speed and clarity of a satellite call to the United States. The streets are crowded and business is good. You might wonder, "What is so different about this town from hundreds of others like it throughout the world?"

But when Sunday dawns on the kingdom of Tonga, a transformation takes place. If one goes downtown, he sees deserted streets—no taxis or buses or crowds of people. All the stores, all the markets, all the movie theaters, all the offices are closed. No planes fly, no ships come in or out, no commerce takes place. No games are played. The people go to church. Tonga is remembering to keep the Sabbath day holy.

It is significant that the first country in the world to greet the holy Sabbath keeps the Sabbath holy.

Has the Lord blessed them? Maybe the world cannot see his blessings, but in the ways that really count, he has blessed them abundantly. He has blessed them with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and a larger percentage of the population there belongs to the Church than in any other country.

Simple, well-kept chapels dot the land. Clean, smiling local missionaries are found everywhere. A beautiful, exceptionally well-attended temple stands in Tonga in fulfillment of promises made years and ages ago. And, as would be expected, their attendance at meetings and faithfulness in tithing are very near the top. Recently the Saints have been blessed with some fairly intense opposition that is having the effect of further sanctifying the true seekers of eternal life.

Does the Lord love and bless those who keep the Sabbath day holy? I testify that he does in eternally meaningful ways. I further testify that when we eventually see things through the proper perspective of eternal truth, we will be amazed at how much we were blessed in important—though often unperceived—ways through keeping the Sabbath holy; and to our sorrow we may sense how many blessings we kept from ourselves by not consistently keeping the Sabbath day holy.

There is a direct correlation between the proper observance of the Sabbath and true reverence for God, which includes obedience to his other commandments.

We can't all live in Tonga, but we can all keep the Sabbath day holy and receive the blessings that come therefrom—and they come to us wherever we live, personally as well as collectively.

Let me give another example from these very valleys:

Cache Valley—you did it!

Some time ago I was assigned to a conference in northern Utah in June. As I drove through Cache Valley on Saturday, I was struck by the beauty of

that peaceful green valley. I marveled at the temple in Logan—such a serene, peaceful beacon in so many ways. As I continued north on that clear summer day, I was impressed with the green fields so rich with a variety of crops. I particularly noticed the great number of alfalfa fields and the constant activity in nearly all of them. What a pleasing sensation it was to smell that freshly mown hay and to see the straight rows and the orderly cutting of those meticulously groomed fields.

I pulled the car over to the side of the road at the top of one of the hills and got out. I found myself absorbed right into that beautiful valley. As far as I could see was a whole panorama of the same activity in every direction—hay being mowed and stacked and hauled.

I finally drove on to the stake where we had a wonderful conference.

My parents live in southeast Idaho, and since I was already more than halfway there, I decided to drive up Sunday afternoon to visit them before returning home.

So, after conference I started north through the rest of Cache Valley. Within a few miles I was in Idaho, but the scenery and feeling were just the same. I again became absorbed in the beauty of the green fields and the smell of fresh hay all around. Again, I stopped at the top of one of the hills and got out and looked as far as I could in all directions. It was just as beautiful—if not more so—than the day before. "Yes, even more beautiful," I thought, "but why?" The sun and sky and the clouds and the fields were all the same. Why this deep feeling that this sight this Sunday afternoon was even more beautiful than the day before?

What was the difference? I noticed in the distance a small LDS chapel and a few cars starting to pull up to it. Then it struck me, rather peacefully but very effectively: "There is the difference. No one is mowing or hauling hay today." I looked as far as I could and saw hay fields everywhere, tractors stopped, mowing machines idle, and trucks resting in the fields, but no one

working—for it was the Sabbath and this was Cache Valley and these were largely good Latter-day Saint people.

As I continued north, I saw everywhere hay to be cut and stacked and hauled and equipment and weather to do it, but no man or woman in the fields. The people of this valley were observing a higher law, and the Sabbath was being kept holy in Cache Valley.

I went by dozens, even hundreds, of farms with machines waiting in the fields—left Saturday evening by God-fearing men waiting for Monday to come and the whine of activity to resume. I wondered to myself, “Will someone break this spell, will someone be out in his fields working?”

Each time I rounded a corner or came to the top of a hill, I would look and look and then breathe a sigh of relief—no one working.

I went farther and farther north, realizing I was near the end of this beautiful valley. “Would anyone break the spell? Could it be a whole valley so dedicated to God that no one would work on the Sabbath?” The suspense became almost unbearable. Each curve I rounded or each hill I came over found me looking in almost fearful anticipation, then smiling as the same peaceful scene continued.

Finally I came to the last curve and the confluence with the main road that marked the end of Cache Valley. I looked and looked, but all was peaceful and quiet. I was so excited, I pulled the car over, got out, and in almost a Toyota-like jump I raised my hands and shouted, “You did it, Cache Valley. You did it! I have traversed your length. You didn’t know I was looking, but you did it—not one field being mowed, not one tractor at work, not one truck hauling. You did it.” (I recognize that I had been through only the northern end of the valley that Sunday, but it was still Cache Valley.)

I instinctively looked heavenward and said, “Did you see that? Did you see Cache Valley this Sunday afternoon?”

Even though I didn’t hear anything, it was as though I sensed a response saying, “Yes, we know. We see everything.”

I had such a joyful feeling—almost ecstasy—as I drove north to a wonderful meeting with my parents before returning home.

For some time after that, I couldn’t get that Sunday afternoon off my mind. I kept feeling, “You have observed and witnessed something very special, something truly significant: an entire valley keeping His Sabbath holy.”

It caused me deep reflection then and many times since, but like so many things it was moved further and further to the back of my mind with the press of many current problems. Winter came, and for all intents and purposes it slipped from my conscious memory.

Power in keeping Sabbath holy

I continued to travel each weekend to various parts of the world. Many months later, I was assigned to a conference in a city noted for its particularly flagrant violations of God’s laws. The Saints there were wonderful, but oh, the decadence and debauchery that seemed to be all around them.

As I returned from the especially hectic weekend, I began reading in the scriptures. I thought about Sodom and Gomorrah. Could they have been much more wicked than this? And yet the Lord promised to spare them for fifty righteous souls—or even down to ten—but they were not found.

I let my imagination go and seemed to see a band of destroying angels loosed from heaven—thundering across the land. And even before I had time to think about the situation, I seemed to see myself standing in front of these determined destroyers, declaring, “Hold, hold, hold”; and they held. “Go back,” I said: and their horses reared, their eyes flashing in impatience. The destroyers’ anxiousness showed, but they held.

The leader looked me squarely in the eye and challenged, "By what right do you ask us to hold? Have you not seen the evil of the land?"

I replied, "Yes, I know of the sordidness of the world. I see the constant mocking of God's laws, the merchandising on his holy day, the constant breaking of his commandments. I see the evil that exists almost universally. Yes, yes, all these things are true, still . . ." Then I became concerned. What right had I to ask them to hold?

My eyes began to fall from his penetrating gaze, but something inside kept searching, searching, until finally a laserlike beam locked onto a misty memory made many months ago and faithfully filed away for such a time as this. A vista of a beautiful green valley passed before me and moved to the front of my consciousness.

I raised my eyes and met his as he again said, "What right do you have to ask us to hold?"

Then with the confidence of sure knowledge and spiritual direction, I replied, "You must hold, for you see, I have been through Cache Valley on a Sunday afternoon."

There was no hesitation, no anger, no look of surprise, no disappointment, only obedience; and he turned and rejoined his group, and they left.

Oh, my dear brothers and sisters, there is power in keeping the Sabbath day holy—power to help others as well as ourselves. If we would have God's blessings and protection as individuals, as families, as communities, and as nations, we must keep His Sabbath day holy.

May we all live that someday, somehow, somewhere, somehow, as we face that which is very serious, we may be able to say, "Hold, hold, hold"; and, when challenged as to why (even by ourselves), be able—through obedience and the confidence of the Spirit—to say in our own way, "For I have been through Cache Valley on a Sunday afternoon." I do humbly pray in the name of our Savior, who lives. I know he lives, even Jesus Christ, amen.

President Benson

There's a vacancy up there in Cache Valley in the Chamber of Commerce; I think they have a good supporter. Elder John H. Groberg, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has just spoken to us.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

Examine yourselves

I propose some simple tests that all of us may take to determine if we are true to the faith. They consist of a few basic questions, all of which must be answered correctly in order to gain the full blessings of the gospel in this life and inherit eternal life in the realms ahead.

Our well-beloved brother Paul, an Apostle of old, counsels us in these words: "Examine yourselves, whether

ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

And we may well ask ourselves: Do we believe all of the doctrines of salvation? Are we keeping the commandments? Are we valiant in the cause of truth and righteousness? Will we be saved in the kingdom of God?

From among many questions that all of us must one day answer, let me test you on these: