

eral session of the 155th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We are particularly grateful for the presence of President Spencer W. Kimball at this session of the conference. We are also delighted to have with us President Marion G. Romney. We excuse Elder Paul H. Dunn of the First Quorum of the Seventy who because of illness is unable to meet with us this morning; otherwise, I think all General Authorities are present.

The significance of this day reminds us of the duties resting on those who have accepted the Savior and who have been baptized into his Church, to honor and to love him, to keep his commandments, and to reflect in our lives the noble qualities of character which he exhibited during his mortal ministry and which he has enjoined upon us by commandment.

We acknowledge those tuned to this conference by radio, television, or cable, those who are seated in the overflow congregation in the Assembly Hall where Elders Marion D. Hanks and F. Burton Howard preside, and those participating through satellite transmission assembled in over seven hundred and fifty stake centers in the

United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, 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 John Longhurst at the organ is providing the music for this session.

The choir opened these services by singing "Rejoice, the Lord Is King" and will now sing "I Believe in Christ"; words written by Elder Bruce R. McConkie.

Following the music of the choir, Elder Robert E. Wells, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "I Believe in Christ."

Elder Robert E. Wells offered the invocation.

President Gordon B. Hinckley spoke without announcement.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Mortal death and immortal life

A few days before last Christmas a terrible tragedy occurred at one of the large coal mines in central Utah. Twenty-seven miners lost their lives when fire engulfed the long underground slopes and shafts. Many of these were young men with young wives and young children. The hearts of thousands over the world were touched by the suffering of loved ones left behind.

I met many of these. I spoke with them. I joined with them in a memorial service. There were tears, with much

of weeping. There was an overwhelming feeling of loneliness as widows, with children to feed and clothe and educate, looked into the bleakness of the future. Our tears flowed with theirs. But shining through all of this was a faith transcendent that, as surely as there had been mortal death, there will be immortal life; and as certainly as there had been separation, there will be reunion. This is the faith which comes of Christ, who brought to all the promise of immortality.

Christ opened gates of salvation

My beloved brethren and sisters, what a glorious day is Easter! This is the day when we, with Christian people everywhere, celebrate the most significant event in human history—the resurrection from the grave, the return to life from death, of the Son of God. Among all the facts of mortality, nothing is so certain as its end. How tragic, how poignant is the sorrow of those left behind. The grieving widow, the motherless child, the father bereft and alone—all of these can speak of the wounds of parting.

But thanks be to God for the wonder and the majesty of His eternal plan. Thank and glorify His Beloved Son, who, with indescribable suffering, gave His life on Calvary's cross to pay the debt of mortal sin. He it was who, through His atoning sacrifice, broke the bonds of death and with godly power rose triumphant from the tomb. He is our Redeemer, the Redeemer of all mankind. He is the Savior of the world. He is the Son of God, the Author of our salvation.

"If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). This is the great universal question framed by Job. He spoke what every other living man or woman has pondered. The Christ alone, of all the millions who up to that time had walked the earth, was the first to emerge from the grave triumphant, a living soul complete in spirit and body. He became "the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20). Were greater words ever spoken than those of the angel that first resurrection morn—"Why seek ye the living among the dead?" (Luke 24:5). "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said" (Matthew 28:6).

His death sealed the testimony of His love for all mankind. His resurrection opened the gates of salvation to the sons and daughters of God of all generations.

In all of history there has been no majesty like His majesty, He, the mighty Jehovah, condescended to be born to mortal life in a stable of Bethle-

hem. He grew as a boy in Nazareth and "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

His crucifixion

He was baptized by John in the waters of Jordan, "and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:16-17).

During the three years of His earthly ministry, He did what none other had ever done before, He taught as none other had previously taught.

Then came His time to be offered. There was the supper in the Upper Room, His last with the Twelve in mortality. As He washed their feet, He taught a lesson in humility and service they would never forget. There followed the suffering of Gethsemane, "which suffering," He said, "caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit" (D&C 19:18).

He was taken by rough and crude hands, and in the night, contrary to the law, was brought before Annas, and then Caiaphas, the wily and evil officer of the Sanhedrin. There followed early the next morning the second appearance before this scheming, vicious man. Then He was taken to Pilate, the Roman governor, to whom his wife said in warning, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man" (Matthew 27:19). The Roman, thinking to evade responsibility, sent Him to Herod, the corrupt, debauched, and evil tetrarch of Galilee. Christ was abused and beaten. His head was crowned with sharp and platted thorns, a mocking robe of purple was thrown upon His bleeding back. Again he was taken before Pilate, to whom the mob cried, "Crucify him, Crucify him" (Luke 23:21).

With stumbling steps He walked the way to Golgotha, where His

wounded body was nailed to the cross in the most inhumane and pain-ridden method of execution that sadistic minds could conjure.

Yet He cried out, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

The hours passed as His life ebbed in pain. The earth shook, the veil of the temple was rent. From His parched lips came the words, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost" (Luke 23:46).

It was over. His mortal life was finished. He had offered it as a ransom for all.

Victory over death

Gone were the hopes of those who loved Him. Forgotten were the promises He had made. His body was hurriedly but tenderly placed in a borrowed tomb on the eve of the Jewish Sabbath. That Sabbath came and went. Then, early in the morning of Sunday, Mary Magdalene and other women came to the tomb. They wondered as they hurried how the stone might be rolled from the door of the sepulchre. Arriving, they saw an angel who spoke to them: "I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said" (Matthew 28:5-6).

It had never before happened. The empty tomb was the answer to the question of the ages. Well did Paul say: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55).

The miracle of that resurrection morning, that first Easter Sunday, is a miracle for all mankind. It is the miracle of the power of God, whose Beloved Son gave His life to atone for the sins of all, a sacrifice of love for every son and daughter of God. In so doing He broke the seals of death.

All of us will die. But that will not be the end. Just as He in the spirit world taught those who once had been disobedient in the days of Noah and were capable of being taught, even so shall

each of us continue as individual personalities capable of learning and teaching and other activities.

And just as He took up His body and came forth from the tomb, even so shall all of us enjoy a reunion of body and spirit to become living souls in the day of our own resurrection.

We rejoice, therefore, as do many, and as should all mankind, when we remember the most glorious, the most comforting, the most reassuring of all events of human history—the victory over death.

Witness to reality of Resurrection

To all the world we bear solemn witness. We have read the testimony of those who participated in the experiences of those three days of pain, of sorrow, and of rejoicing. We have read of the sufferings endured by those who testified of these things and of their willingness to give their own lives rather than deny the truth of that which they had seen. We have read the testimony of those in Palestine and of those in the New World who were visited by the risen Lord. The Spirit has borne witness within our hearts concerning the truth of these testimonies.

We also have the testimony of one who, in the opening of this dispensation, spoke with the living Christ and with His Eternal Father, and who gave his own life to seal that testimony with his blood. Declared he in words of soberness:

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

"That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God" (D&C 76:22-24).

In solemnity, and with understanding of the gravity of that which we

say, we add our witness to all the world of the reality of the Resurrection, that this same Jesus who rose from the grave ascended into heaven. We declare that in this dispensation of time He returned to restore to earth the pristine gospel which He had taught while walking among men, that with that restoration has come further certain witness of His reality, and has come also the holy priesthood, given to men, which is exercised in His name. This is our testimony, which we bear in the name of Jesus Christ, and we invite all men to hear and accept it.

Special fast for starving in Africa

And now, I should like to turn to another matter, dealing with an expression of the gospel of our Lord of whom we have spoken.

When the lawyer tempted Him, asking, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?"

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:36-40).

When hearts across the world were touched by reports of starving populations in Africa, we invited members of the Church in the United States and Canada to observe a special fast day, abstaining from two meals and giving the equivalent value, or more, to aid these famine-stricken people. We at the time asked only those in North America because of a desire to move quickly, and we felt there was not sufficient time to put in place the program elsewhere. Many of you outside North America have asked that you be given a similar opportunity, and some have responded.

The response of those who participated has been wonderful. It has been most gratifying. It was far more generous than at the regular monthly fast. We, as the trustees of your contributions, should like to give you an accounting of what we have done to date. Your contributions have reached the sum of \$6,025,656. We indicated that any money so received would be handled through organizations of demonstrated integrity. We do not have members of the Church in the areas where the need is most acute. If we were to help quickly and effectively, we had to join hands with others, and this has been a most gratifying experience. We have come to know that there are many organizations that are doing great good in stemming the tide of hunger that threatens millions in that part of the world. We have associated ourselves in this endeavor with four of these, who have been most cooperative and helpful.

Thus far we have distributed funds as follows:

American Red Cross	\$1,300,000
(for use by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International League of Red Cross)	(plus \$100,000 given earlier, making a total of \$1,400,000)
Catholic Relief Services	\$1,400,000
Africare	\$1,100,000
Care, Inc	\$ 500,000
Total committed from the special fast	\$4,300,000

Geographic Breakdown of Expenditures

Ethiopia	\$2,850,000
Sudan	\$ 825,000
Other African nations	\$ 625,000
	<u>\$4,300,000</u>

As I indicated, we had previously given \$100,000, making a total of \$4,400,000.

The balance will be committed to areas where our research indicates the

greatest need, to be administered also by qualified agencies.

Aid means difference between life and death

Some few have criticized us for extending aid to those who are the victims of the policies or mismanagement of their governments. My response has been that where there is stark hunger, regardless of the cause, I will not let political considerations dull my sense of mercy or thwart my responsibility to the sons and daughters of God, wherever they may be or whatever their circumstances.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy and Bishop Glenn L. Pace, who joined the Presiding Bishopric yesterday, have just returned from Africa, where they went out into the rural areas of Ethiopia. They saw firsthand how the funds you consecrated are literally saving the lives of many who otherwise would die of starvation, disease, and exposure. Your contributions not only have supplied food and medicine where they are so desperately needed, but your contributions also have furnished tents sufficient to put thirty thousand people under shelter from the blistering sun and the cold night winds, with blankets to comfort them. The food and other commodities are getting through to those who need them. There has been no interference with this, but only the best of cooperation.

Elder Ballard and Bishop Pace have been with these suffering people. They say they are men and women of courage and character, but they are defeated and frightened by the terrifying circumstances in which they find themselves. Their lands are dry and naked. There is neither irrigation water nor food. They wander in desperation until they and their children die unless they are fed. A little cracked wheat literally spells the difference between life and death.

Only if rains come and wells are drilled can there be long-term recovery

and sustenance. Some of our funds will be used in a joint venture relationship to drill in areas of underground water to bring land under cultivation and make it fruitful, with the hope that there may be long-term as well as short-term help for these destitute people.

Acknowledgments

I, for one, am deeply grateful for the opportunity to assist in blessing those of our Father's children in that part of the earth who are in such desperate need. I am confident that there springs up in the heart of each of you a feeling of appreciation for what has come to pass and will yet further come to pass as the result of many of our people with one heart doing so small a thing as refraining from two meals and contributing the value thereof to a common effort. Think what might happen if there were such a fast day observed across the world. No one would be hurt, and many would be helped. How grateful we are for the inspiration of the Almighty in establishing so simple, yet so effective a program for relieving want and suffering.

In the administration of African relief we have not used a single dollar for overhead, but every dollar you have contributed has gone or will go to help directly those in such urgent need, not one of whom is a member of the Church.

May I read a few lines from two letters. The first is from the chairman of Catholic Relief Services:

"I want to acknowledge the very generous contribution of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . for relief efforts in Ethiopia and the Sudan. You can be sure that these funds will be put to rapid use to help alleviate the suffering that millions face in those countries.

"We are pleased to participate in an interfaith action of this kind. Such ecumenical efforts underline the compassion and concern which we hold in common when faced by such human

tragedies as well as our common commitment to positive action.

"This cooperation between us has a special character since the resources involved come directly from your individual members through a day of fasting. It is thus in a very heartening sense an example of people responding to people at a fundamental level of moral and practical concern. . . . Sincerely yours in Christ, [signed] Daniel P. Reilly, Bishop of Norwich, chairman of the board of directors"

And now from the president of the American Red Cross:

"I cannot thank you and your members in the U.S. and Canada enough for the outstanding support you have given the Red Cross relief effort in Africa. Your most recent contribution of \$800,000 brings the total donations to \$1,400,000. This support . . . has permitted us to provide 350,000 victims food for a month based upon the Red Cross estimate that \$4 a month is needed to feed a child. . . .

"In Ethiopia . . . on a daily average the Red Cross workers are feeding more than 500,000 people. . . . Red Cross assistance is being provided to the most vulnerable groups: children under 5 years of age, pregnant women, nursing mothers and the elderly. In northern Ethiopia where few other organizations are able to work, assistance is being given to the most needy.

"In neighboring Sudan the situation is deteriorating rapidly. 200,000 to 300,000 new refugees from Chad, Uganda and Ethiopia are expected by the end of May. In addition, Sudan itself is being affected by the drought with 280,000 forced to leave their homes in search of food. 15,000 children were recently found to suffer night blindness, the last step to total blindness due to poor nutrition. These children are now being fed by the Red Cross. . . .

"You may be assured the Red Cross is honored by the trust you have

placed in our relief work. *All* contributions given through the American Red Cross are used in African Famine Relief. No overhead or fund raising costs are being deducted. I know your members have sacrificed to make this relief possible. The trust of your fellowship will be honored. God bless you all. [Signed] Richard Schubert, President"

Walk in obedience and deal with mercy

As you see, we have provided immediate aid to the extent of \$4,400,000.

Thank you for what you have done. Many contributed far more than the value of two meals. You have cast bread upon the waters, and it will return to you as you experience the peace of generous hearts.

You responded in a magnificent way in sharing of your plenty with those who are destitute. We can similarly respond to a score of other challenges we face as Latter-day Saints to move forward the work of God. On this Easter morning, when we remember Him who gave His life for each of us, let us resolve, individually, to walk in obedience to the teachings and commandments of our Savior and to deal with mercy, I humbly pray as I leave with you my testimony of the divinity of this work, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "O Savior, Thou Who Wearest a Crown," following which Elder David B. Haight will address us.

The choir sang "O Savior, Thou Who Wearest a Crown."

Elder David B. Haight spoke without further announcement.
