

He spoke as an Apostle, a special witness of the Christ.

We are grateful for the continuing strength and vitality of President Ezra

Taft Benson, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. He will be our first speaker this morning.

President Ezra Taft Benson

"What think ye of Christ?" (Matthew 22:42). That question, posed by our Lord, has challenged the world for centuries.

Choose the right way

Fortunately for us, God has provided modern scripture, another testament, even the Book of Mormon, for the convincing of the world that Jesus is the Christ. Anyone who will read the Book of Mormon and put it to the divine test that Moroni proposes (see Moroni 10:3-5) can be convinced that Jesus is the Christ. Once that conviction is gained, then comes the question "Will we choose to follow Him?" The devils believe that Jesus is the Christ, but they choose to follow Lucifer. (See James 2:19; Mark 5:7.)

Throughout the ages prophets have exhorted the people to make up their minds. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve," pled Joshua (Joshua 24:15).

Elijah thundered, "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21).

When you choose to follow Christ, you choose the Way, the Truth, the Life—the right way, the saving truth, the abundant life. (See John 14:6.)

Fundamental and permanent change

"I would commend you to seek this Jesus," states Moroni (Ether 12:41).

When you choose to follow Christ, you choose to be changed.

"No man," said President David O. McKay, "can sincerely resolve to

apply in his daily life the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth without sensing a change in his own nature. The phrase 'born again' has a deeper significance than many people attach to it. This *changed feeling* may be indescribable, *but it is real*" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1962, p. 7).

Can human hearts be changed? Why, of course! It happens every day in the great missionary work of the Church. It is one of the most widespread of Christ's modern miracles. If it hasn't happened to you—it should.

Our Lord told Nicodemus that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Of these words President Kimball said, "This is the simple total answer to the weightiest of all questions. . . . To gain eternal life there must be a rebirth, a transformation" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1958, p. 14).

President McKay said that Christ called for "an entire revolution" of Nicodemus's "inner man." "His manner of thinking, feeling, and acting with reference to spiritual things would have to undergo a fundamental and permanent change" (in Conference Report, Apr., 1960, p. 26).

Born of God

Besides the physical ordinance of baptism and the laying on of hands, one must be spiritually born again to gain exaltation and eternal life.

Alma states: "And the Lord said unto me; Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being re-

deemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters;

"And thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God" (Mosiah 27:25-26).

A change of heart

The "change of heart" and "born again" processes are best described in the keystone of our religion, the Book of Mormon.

Those who had been born of God after hearing King Benjamin's address had a mighty change in their hearts. They had "no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually." (See Mosiah 5:2, 7.)

The fourth chapter of Alma describes a period in Nephite history when "the church began to fail in its progress" (Alma 4:10). Alma met this challenge by resigning his seat as chief judge in government "and confined himself wholly to the high priesthood" responsibility which was his (Alma 4:20).

He bore "down in pure testimony" against the people (see Alma 4:19), and in the fifth chapter of Alma he asks over forty crucial questions.

Speaking frankly to the members of the Church, he declared, "I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?" (Alma 5:14).

He continued, "If ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?" (Alma 5:26).

From inside out

Would not the progress of the Church increase dramatically today with an increasing number of those who are spiritually reborn? Can you imagine what would happen in our homes? Can you imagine what would happen with

an increasing number of copies of the Book of Mormon in the hands of an increasing number of missionaries who know how to use it and who have been born of God? When this happens, we will get the harvest President Kimball envisions. It was the "born of God" Alma who as a missionary was so able to impart the word that many others were also born of God. (See Alma 36:23-26.)

The Lord works from the inside out. The world works from the outside in. The world would take people out of the slums. Christ takes the slums out of people, and then they take themselves out of the slums. The world would mold men by changing their environment. Christ changes men, who then change their environment. The world would shape human behavior, but Christ can change human nature.

Can change the world

"Human nature *can* be changed, here and now," said President McKay, and then he quoted the following:

"You can change human nature. No man who has felt in him the Spirit of Christ even for half a minute can deny this truth. . . .

"You do change human nature, your own human nature, if you surrender it to Christ. Human nature can be changed here and now. Human nature has been changed in the past. Human nature must be changed on an enormous scale in the future, unless the world is to be drowned in its own blood. And only Christ can change it.

"Twelve men did quite a lot to change the world [nineteen hundred] years ago. Twelve simple men'" (Quoting Beverly Nichols, in *Stepping Stones to an Abundant Life*, comp. Llewelyn R. McKay [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971], pp. 23, 127).

Yes, Christ changes men, and changed men can change the world.

Men changed for Christ will be captained by Christ. Like Paul they will be asking, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). Peter stated,

they will "follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). John said they will "walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:6).

Witnesses of God

Finally, men captained by Christ will be consumed in Christ. To paraphrase President Harold B. Lee, they set fire in others because they are on fire. (See *Stand Ye in Holy Places* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974], p. 192.)

Their will is swallowed up in His will. (See John 5:30.)

They do always those things that please the Lord. (See John 8:29.)

Not only would they die for the Lord, but more important they want to live for Him.

Enter their homes, and the pictures on their walls, the books on their shelves, the music in the air, their words and acts reveal them as Christians.

They stand as witnesses of God at all times, and in all things, and in all places. (See Mosiah 18:9.)

Find eternal life

They have Christ on their minds, as they look unto Him in every thought. (See D&C 6:36.)

They have Christ in their hearts as their affections are placed on Him forever. (See Alma 37:36.)

Almost every week they partake of the sacrament and witness anew to their Eternal Father that they are willing to take upon them the name of His Son, always remember Him, and keep His commandments. (See Moroni 4:3.)

In Book of Mormon language, they "feast upon the words of Christ" (2 Nephi 32:3), "talk of Christ" (2 Nephi 25:26), "rejoice in Christ" (2 Nephi 25:26), "are made alive in Christ" (2 Nephi 25:25), and "glory in [their] Jesus" (2 Nephi 33:6).

In short, they lose themselves in the Lord, and find eternal life. (See Luke 17:33.)

They who have overcome the world

President David O. McKay tells of a singular event that happened to him. After falling asleep, he said he "beheld in vision something infinitely sublime." He saw a beautiful city, a great concourse of people dressed in white, and the Savior.

"The city, I understood, was his. It was the City Eternal; and the people following him were to abide there in peace and eternal happiness.

"But who were they?"

"As if the Savior read my thoughts, he answered by pointing to a semicircle that then appeared above them, and on which were written in gold the words:

"These Are They Who Have Overcome the World—Who Have Truly Been Born Again!"

"When I awoke, it was breaking day" (*Cherished Experiences from the Writings of President David O. McKay*, comp. Clare Middlemiss [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976], pp. 59–60).

When we awake and are born of God, a new day will break and Zion will be redeemed.

May we be convinced that Jesus is the Christ, choose to follow Him, be changed for Him, captained by Him, consumed in Him, and born again I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "How Great Thou Art" and "For the Strength of the Hills" without announcement.

President Hinckley

We have heard President Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. The Tabernacle Choir then presented two beautiful and stirring hymns from the new hymnbook, "How Great Thou Art" and that marvelous hymn from the pen of Evan Stephens, "For the Strength of