

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

My brothers and sisters, I am deeply humbled at the confidence of the Lord and my Brethren and pledge to you that I will do the very best I know how. The past nine and a half years, as I have been sent on errands for the Lord throughout the earth, have caused me to know that this Church is filled with righteous, good, dedicated men. Each of us obediently learns that we will come forth as we are called, to try to do the very best we can in our callings, whether it be home teacher, whether it be stake president, or whether it be General Authority.

### Source of the call

I understand the source of the call. I have learned during the past nine and a half years that this is our Heavenly Father's church. The errands that I have been sent on to act in the name of the Lord enable me to witness to you today that I know, as I know that I stand before you, that Jesus is the Christ, that he lives. He is very close to this work and very close to all of us who are asked to perform the work throughout the earth in his name.

I would like also to bear witness that in my particular case the veil between here and the hereafter is rather thin. I acknowledge that it has been a great blessing in my life to be born of goodly parents, grandparents, and

great-grandparents who have given everything they have been asked to give to the building of the kingdom of God upon the earth.

Now, my brothers and sisters, I would ask for an interest in your faith and prayers. I express my affection to my wife and my children, who sustain me in whatever the Lord might ask me to do. I am grateful for this abundant blessing and pray humbly that I might serve you, the membership of this Church, in a way that would be pleasing and acceptable unto our Heavenly Father, and ask this prayer humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Benson

Elder M. Russell Ballard, a new member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just addressed us. The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Come, Come, Ye Saints." Elder Rex C. Reeve, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will then speak to us. Following him, we will hear from Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Elder Rex C. Reeve spoke without further announcement.

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## Elder Rex C. Reeve

### Spirit in this conference

I am humbled and privileged to have participated with you in this great conference, whether you have been viewing it by satellite or at home, or whether you will yet see it on video. I am thrilled and touched by the calls which have been announced here today and sustain the Brethren with all my

heart. I am grateful to be part of the Lord's work.

The Lord has said:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, as I said unto my disciples, where two or three are gathered together in my name, as touching one thing, behold, there will I be in the midst of them—even so am I in the midst of you" (D&C 6:32).

We have surely been blessed by the fulfillment of this promise at this great conference.

### Restored gospel and authority

All truth and all hope are centered in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The scripture defines the gospel in just two brief verses:

"And this is the gospel, the glad tidings, which the voice out of the heavens bore record unto us—

"That he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness" (D&C 76:40-41).

In our day he restored again to earth his gospel and also his authority to preach and administer in its saving ordinances.

### Joseph Smith, the chosen instrument

Joseph Smith the Prophet was the chosen instrument through which the Restoration took place. He was selected of the Lord before his birth to fill this most important mission. The ancient prophets knew of him and spoke of him.

Joseph who was sold into Egypt prophesied of him—he even knew his name and his father's name.

"For Joseph truly testified, saying: A seer shall the Lord my God raise up. . . .

"Behold, that seer will the Lord bless; . . .

"And his name shall be called after me; and it shall be after the name of his father. And he shall be like unto me; for the thing, which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand, by the power of the Lord shall bring my people unto salvation" (2 Nephi 3:6, 14-15).

### Ordained in the Grand Council in heaven

When the Lord wants to change the world, he doesn't send armies or use powerful groups.

When it was time to lead the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage, the Lord didn't send an army; he sent a baby boy to a Levite home. This baby boy was later to be known as Moses, whom we know as the great lawgiver and the one who delivered the children of Israel from bondage.

In the meridian of time, the Father sent his own Son to be born of a virgin mother in a lowly manger. The whole world was affected by his brief life's mission, and he still remains the only hope of mankind, here and hereafter.

When it was time to restore his gospel to prepare the world for the second coming of his Son, he again sent a baby boy to the home of a righteous father and mother. On 23 December 1805, a baby boy came to the home of Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith.

He was born of noble, God-fearing parents who loved the Lord.

His paternal grandfather, Asael Smith, stated years before Joseph was born (and I quote):

"It has been borne in upon my soul that one of my descendants will promulgate a work to revolutionize the world of religious faith" (in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History*, Classics in Mormon Literature [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979], p. 25).

Joseph Smith said: "Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was. I suppose I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 365).

I testify to you he *was* and he *is* a prophet of God and did restore the gospel of Jesus Christ in our day, together

with the power and keys of authority to administer therein.

### Where Joseph lived and served

My assignments have taken me to the areas where he was born, where he lived and served, and where he died as a martyr.

Near South Royalton, Vermont, a thirty-eight-foot, fifty-ton granite obelisk (a one-piece granite shaft, one foot for each year of his life) stands to mark the place of his birth. There is surely a hallowed feeling there.

It was interesting to me to learn from the history of this area that there were three winters in a row when the snowfall was extra heavy, making farming difficult and almost non-productive, causing the Smith family to move west to upper state New York in the Manchester/Palmyra area, where they hoped to better their condition. This brought Joseph to the Hill Cumorah area, where he needed to be.

In his need to know which church to join, he read from James in the Holy Bible these words:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5).

### The Sacred Grove

In the Sacred Grove where he went to pray, he did see and he did hear God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. In answer to his question as to which church he should join, he was answered (and I quote his words):

"I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; . . . 'they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof'" (Joseph Smith—History 1:19).

There is something special about this grove. The feeling, the spirit there

is different. A hallowed reverence pervades the area.

### The Hill Cumorah and the Book of Mormon

Not far from the Sacred Grove is the Hill Cumorah, in which the angel Moroni, an ancient American prophet, had placed in a stone box the golden plates which contained an abridgment of the record of the Lord's dealings with a people who had lived on the American continent years before.

By the gift and power of God, Joseph translated the record from these plates and published a sacred volume known as the Book of Mormon, which is another testament of Jesus Christ.

This book was published in Palmyra, New York, by E. B. Grandin. The Grandin building is now a visitors' center where the story of the Book of Mormon's publication is told. From this small beginning the Book of Mormon has been published in seventy languages, making it available to 73 percent of the people of the earth.

It is a sacred record translated by the gift and power of God. Its preface, given by revelation, states its purpose: to convince Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God. It teaches and testifies of Jesus Christ and contains a fulness of his gospel.

Joseph Smith said this about it: "I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book" (*History of the Church*, 4:461).

### The move to Ohio, and the Whitney store

The Lord commanded the Saints to go to Ohio. I quote his words:

"Wherefore, for this cause I gave unto you the commandment that ye should go to the Ohio; and there I will give unto you my law; and there you

shall be endowed with power from on high" (D&C 38:32).

As I studied the great events which took place in Ohio, I found that many marvelous things transpired. There was the incident at the Whitney store as the Prophet Joseph and Emma were driven up to the store for the first time in a horse-drawn sleigh, and the Prophet Joseph alighted and greeted Newell K. Whitney, the store owner, in these words.

"Newell K. Whitney! Thou art the man! . . . You've prayed me here, now what do you want of me?" (*History of the Church*, 1:146).

The upper room in the Whitney store was the meeting place of the first School of the Prophets; the revelation on the Word of Wisdom and many other revelations were given there.

### Christ accepts the Kirtland Temple

The temple in Kirtland was built by the Saints in their dire poverty. It was erected at great sacrifice.

Joseph himself worked in the stone quarry. The drill marks can still be seen where the stones were cut.

Following the dedication of this first temple, which was a glorious occasion, the risen Christ appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery as they knelt in prayer. I quote their words:

"The veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened.

"We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber.

"His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying:

"I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father. . . .

"Let the hearts of your brethren rejoice, and let the hearts of all my people rejoice, who have, with their might, built this house to my name.

"For behold, I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house. . . .

"And the fame of this house shall spread to foreign lands; and this is the beginning of the blessing which shall be poured out upon the heads of my people. Even so. Amen" (D&C 110:1-4, 6-7, 10).

Following this vision, Moses, Elias, and Elijah appeared to Joseph and Oliver, to bring keys of the priesthood which are of such great worth to us and to all mankind.

### Nauvoo, city and temple

The Saints were forced to leave Ohio and their temple, built at so much sacrifice and such a great cost, and move to Missouri where they suffered again. Some lost their lives. Others found refuge at Commerce, Illinois, a swampy area on the east bank of the Mississippi River, where with their industry and faith they built the beautiful city of Nauvoo and erected another temple to their God. Nauvoo became the largest city in the great state of Illinois.

But they could find no lasting peace and were yet to be forced to leave Nauvoo and their temple and seek a desert place no one else would want.

### Joseph and Hyrum sealed testimonies with blood

This baby boy from Vermont now neared the completion of his work. He had translated and brought forth the Book of Mormon, had received the keys and authority from God, and had organized The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The earthly scene for the Prophet Joseph and Hyrum Smith comes to a close at Carthage, Illinois.

Under a pretended promise of protection from the governor of the state of Illinois, they placed themselves in the custody of the law. They received no protection, and there, at the hands of a lawless mob, their mortal lives closed. As martyrs, they sealed their testimonies with their own blood.

It is difficult to put in words the feelings one has as one stands in that sacred place.

The governor of Illinois, Thomas B. Ford, who had promised Joseph protection, said of him after his death (and I quote):

"Thus fell Joe Smith, the most successful impostor in modern times" (in *History of the Church*, 7:35).

### Second temple dedicated in Illinois

This summer, as we attended the dedication of the second temple to be built in Illinois and realized that over one hundred thousand of our friends had attended the open house for this

beautiful Chicago Temple, these prophetic words of Joseph Smith had new meaning as to who directs this work: "No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done" (*History of the Church*, 4:540).

Of this I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord, amen.

### President Benson

We have just heard from Elder Rex C. Reeve, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder Boyd K. Packer, a member of the Council of the Twelve, will now address us.

## Elder Boyd K. Packer

### Sacred brotherhood

We believe that a man must [not could be, or might be, but must] be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof" (Articles of Faith 1:5). In this manner we receive our commissions to move forward.

Today we have all participated in the sustaining of Elder M. Russell Ballard as a new member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. I'm sure Brother Bruce R. McConkie, with whom Brother Ballard worked on a daily basis in missionary work, is rejoicing this day in what has transpired.

I think the world little understands the significance of this sacred priesthood body, and I join my Brethren in

welcoming you, Brother Ballard, to this sacred brotherhood.

In a former day, it was Peter, James, John, Andrew, Phillip, Bartholomew, and the others. And in just as real and literal a way, the same office, the same calling, the same sacred relationship with the Lord exists today. In our day, it is Spencer and Marion and Gordon and Ezra and Howard and Thomas and the others, with the same obligation, the same sustaining power to see this work move forward.

I feel humble that it was my privilege with you to raise my hand on this sacred occasion.

### The only true church

I desire, for the few minutes allotted me, to encourage you who feel inadequate when someone rejects one or