

### President Hinckley

President Ezra Taft Benson, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has just spoken to us.

The Tabernacle Choir then sang "Know This, That Every Soul Is Free."

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder David B. Haight

My dear brethren and sisters, I rejoice with you in being present this morning to hear the voice of our prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, and to feel of his spirit and loving concern for all of mankind as he has counseled the Church and the people of the world.

### Principle of common consent

This conference is historic because we will be given the opportunity to raise our hands to personally sustain a newly called prophet of God, his counselors, and other Church leaders. A solemn assembly grants to members the right to participate in the principle of common consent, instituted by revelation, authorizing members to sustain those called to official positions. Individual histories and personal accounts of this historic conference will be a highlight throughout our lives.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints proclaims to the world that this church is a restoration of Christ's church. A restoration was necessary because prophets and Apostles, who were the foundation of the Lord's original church, were put to death or otherwise taken. The Church today is built on a foundation of prophets and Apostles, with Jesus Christ as its chief cornerstone. It is therefore not a reformation, a revision, a reorganization, or a mere sect. It is the Church of Jesus Christ restored in these latter days.

### Continuous revelation from the Lord

A distinguishing feature of the Church is the claim to continuous revelation from the Lord—"the making known of divine truth by communications from its heavens" (James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924], p. 296). Today, the Lord's Church is guided by the same relationship with Deity that existed in previous dispensations.

This claim is not made lightly. I know there is revelation, as I am a witness to sacred things also experienced by others who administer His work.

The principle of revelation by the Holy Ghost is a fundamental principle of the Lord's Church. Prophets of God receive revelation by this process. Individual members of the Church may also receive revelation to confirm truth. The Prophet Joseph Smith told us that "no man can receive the Holy Ghost without receiving revelation" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, scl. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1977], p. 328).

### "Give heed unto all his words and commandments"

On April 6, 1830—the day the Church was organized in this dispensation—the Lord revealed to members of His church how they should regard the words of His appointed prophet with these instructions:

"Thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

"For his word ye shall receive, *as if from mine own mouth*, in all patience and faith" (D&C 21:4-5; italics added).

From the day of that revelation, faithful members of the Church have looked to the First Presidency for their instruction, and Zion has prospered.

### **Revelation from the Lord and sustaining by the people**

When one Church President passes away, how is a new President selected?

In 1835 the Lord gave a revelation on this matter that provides for orderly succession. The revelation states that the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles is a body equal in authority to the First Presidency. (See D&C 107:24.) That means that when the President of the Church dies, the First Presidency is dissolved and the Quorum of the Twelve automatically becomes the presiding body of the Church. That pattern was established with the death of the Church's first President, Joseph Smith.

Following the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum in 1844, the Quorum of the Twelve, with Brigham Young as quorum president, presided over the Church for the next three and one-half years.

Then, on the banks of the Missouri River in Winter Quarters on December 5, 1847, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles met in council at the home of Orson Hyde. Each of the twelve Apostles expressed his views regarding the matter of reorganizing the First Presidency. Present in that meeting was Ezra T. Benson, great-grandfather of President Ezra Taft Benson. On that occasion, Brigham Young, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, was unanimously sustained by members of that body as President of the Church. He selected

Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards as Counselors. This action created a new First Presidency, which was later sustained by the unanimous vote of the Saints at a general conference of the Church held December 24, 1847, in a log tabernacle constructed at Winter Quarters by the Saints for this special conference. This action was later ratified by members of the Church at conferences in Iowa, Salt Lake City, and the British Isles.

This divinely revealed procedure for installing a new First Presidency of the Church—revelation from the Lord and sustaining by the people—has been followed to our present day. The First Presidency is to be "upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church" (D&C 107:22).

### **Prophet called of God**

Several years ago President Spencer W. Kimball, then a member of the Twelve Apostles, on such an occasion as this, said:

"It is reassuring to know that [a new President is] . . . not elected through committees and conventions with all their conflicts, criticisms, and by the vote of men, but [is] called of God and then sustained by the people. . . .

"The pattern divine allows for no errors, no conflicts, no ambitions, no ulterior motives. The Lord has reserved for himself the calling of his leaders over his church" (*Ensign*, Jan. 1973, p. 33).

### **Calling and preparation of President Ezra Taft Benson**

The calling of Ezra Taft Benson as the thirteenth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will long be remembered, particularly by the seven newest members of the Quorum of the Twelve, who experienced for the first time the holy direction we received in the calling of a President of the Church. After much fasting and prayer, and the seeking of personal

revelation to know the mind and will of God, it was confirmed to our souls who should be called—even Ezra Taft Benson. This I know! With that heavenly confirmation to each of those present, Ezra Taft Benson was ordained and set apart on Sunday, November 10, 1985, as prophet, seer, and revelator, and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

What kind of preparation had the Lord given to this servant whom we will sustain as God's prophet, seer, and revelator?

He was reared on a small farm in Whitney, Idaho, the eldest of eleven children. His stalwart parents had great faith in God. They taught their children that, in spite of difficulties and hardships, they could always go to the Lord and He would give them strength and help.

President Benson's father lovingly counseled his young son: "Remember that whatever you do or wherever you are, you are never alone. Our Heavenly Father is always near. You can reach out and receive His aid through prayer." On many occasions, our beloved prophet has stated: "[This is] prized above any other advice I have ever received. It has become an integral part of me, an anchor, a constant source of strength" (Frederick W. Babbel, *On Wings of Faith* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1972], p. 85).

Prayer has sustained him throughout his life, including during his early missionary experiences in England, where on one occasion his very life was in peril.

Both President and Sister Benson came from stalwart families. They have reared their family with the same teachings they received in their early homes—with a fervent trust in Almighty God.

### Europe after World War II

Called as a new Apostle in 1943, Elder Benson soon received from the

First Presidency a most challenging and significant assignment. He was assigned to give assistance to members of the Church in Europe who had been devastated by World War II. He witnessed the ravages of war. He saw the hungry, the cold, the destitute.

Frederick W. Babbel, called to serve as executive secretary to Elder Benson while he was in Europe, wrote to his family:

"The Lord knew what he was doing when he sent [Elder] Benson over here. He is a living apostle of God in every way. . . . I continue to marvel at his unwavering faith, his unflinching courage, his resolute determination and undaunted spirit. . . . He not only speaks to God, but he listens, and I'm sure God speaks with him even as he did with his apostles of old. . . . [He is] one of the humblest, most devoted men I have ever known, so kind in spirit and manner. . . . a man surpassing all men I have known" (*On Wings of Faith*, p. 125).

In this special assignment, President Benson was responsible for perhaps the largest distribution of welfare supplies to members that has been undertaken. Thousands of tons of food, clothing, bedding, and medical supplies were delivered to Saints in thirteen nations. It is significant that he will now be sustained as the President of the Church during the fiftieth anniversary of the welfare program.

During that historic mission away from his family, Elder Benson held meetings with the Saints, reorganized the branches and missions, and lifted members' spirits. To them he was an angel of mercy.

Only by prayer and divine intervention was he able to accomplish that mission and gain entrance into some countries. He said, "I assure you I know the source of the success which attended our labors. . . . It would [have been impossible] . . . to accomplish the mission . . . without the directing power of the Almighty" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1947, p. 152).

## U.S. Secretary of Agriculture

For eight years he served in the cabinet of the president of the United States. Before the first Cabinet meeting, then-Secretary Benson suggested to President-elect Eisenhower that they commence with prayer. President Eisenhower spoke of the weight of responsibility on the new administration and the need for divine guidance, then called on the secretary of agriculture to open the meeting with prayer. That practice continued throughout the Eisenhower administration.

As secretary of agriculture, he met with world leaders and traveled to most parts of the world. That experience also found him threatened by whirlwinds of the politically ambitious. But seeking strength from the Almighty, as he had done so often in the past, he stood firm in principle and survived efforts to bring about a more politically expedient course of action. Today, the name of Ezra Taft Benson is synonymous with integrity.

## Love for all people and for his family

In things that matter most, President Benson has few peers. I know he loves the Lord and depends upon Him for strength, inspiration, and direction. He loves all our Father's children everywhere and will go to extraordinary lengths to respond to their spiritual and temporal needs. He loves people of all faiths, of all creeds, of all colors, and of differing philosophies. I know I can speak for all of my Brethren of the General Authorities in saying that we have felt of his love and concern for each of us and for our families and loved ones. We wholeheartedly reciprocate that love to President and Sister Benson and their family.

President Benson loves his family and keeps in constant touch with them—his six children (all faithful in

the Church), thirty-four grandchildren, and twenty great-grandchildren. He and Sister Benson have a motto in their family, that in this life and the next there will be "no empty chairs." Can you think of a more heavenly goal?

## Witness for Jesus Christ

As the Lord's prophet, he stands as a preeminent witness for Jesus Christ. He has borne witness of the name of Christ in almost every nation of the world.

I bear my personal witness to you, my brethren and sisters, that President Ezra Taft Benson has been chosen by our Heavenly Father to "move the cause of Zion in mighty power for good." As with Joseph Smith, the Lord can say of President Benson, "his diligence I know, and his prayers I have heard" (D&C 21:7).

May God bless each of us with listening ears, to heed the counsel of our new First Presidency, whom we love and sustain with all of our hearts, to the end that our lives will be blessed and the cause of Zion will prosper and expand throughout the world, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Hinckley

Elder David B. Haight, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top a Banner is Unfurled." Following the singing, we shall hear from Elder Richard G. Scott, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

---

The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

---