

Power of priesthood to bless lives of the Saints

I very humbly commit to you, my dear brothers and sisters, that in my calling as a member of the Council of the Twelve, I will do everything within my power to teach the plan of our Father in Heaven for the redemption and exaltation of his children. I will strive to clarify the truths that can provide eternal life for the sons and daughters of God. I pledge to the First Presidency and to you that I will so live that if I ever should be sent to unlock the way for the restored gospel to enter a nation of the earth, I will be prepared the way the first missionaries were when they dedicated and blessed the lands of South America.

We are living in a most exciting time. What a joy it is to know that the power of the holy priesthood is operating throughout the Church to bless the lives of the Saints. It is wonderful to know that the priesthood vested in the latter-day Apostles has, in this dispensation, opened many nations to the preaching of the gospel. Surely in the

future we will see other nations opened in the same remarkable way.

I testify to you that Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten Son of our Eternal Heavenly Father. He is our Savior, our Redeemer, our Friend and Brother. I love him with all my heart and count it the greatest privilege that could ever come to a man to be a special witness to his name throughout the world.

May the Lord bless us, my brothers and sisters, in doing his work, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Though Deepening Trials" without announcement.

President Hinckley

Elder M. Russell Ballard, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us, following which the choir sang "Though Deepening Trials."

President Howard W. Hunter, Acting President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

President Howard W. Hunter

Christ conquered death

Alexander the Great, king of Macedonia, pupil of Aristotle, conqueror of most of the known world in his time, was one of the world's great young leaders. After years of exercising military pomp and prowess and after extending his kingdom from Macedonia to Egypt and from Cyprus to India, he wept when there seemed to be no more world to conquer. Then, as evidence of just how ephemeral such power is, Alexander caught a fever and died at thirty-three years of age. The vast kingdom he had gained virtually died with him.

Quite a different young leader also died at what seems such an untimely

age of thirty-three. He likewise was a king, a pupil, and a conqueror. Yet he received no honors from man, achieved no territorial conquests, rose to no political station. So far as we know, he never held a sword nor wore even a single piece of armor. But the kingdom he established still flourishes some two thousand years later. His power was not of this world.

The differences between Alexander and this equally young Nazarene are many. But the greatest difference is in their ultimate victories. Alexander conquered lands, peoples, principalities, and earthly kingdoms. But he who is called the Perfect Leader, he who was and is the Light and Life of the world—Jesus Christ the Son of God—

conquered what neither Alexander nor any other could defeat or overcome: Jesus of Nazareth conquered death. Against the medals and monuments of centuries of men's fleeting victories stands the only monument necessary to mark the eternal triumph—an empty garden tomb.

Easter

Last week, we and all the rest of the Christian world celebrated Easter. In our great general conference of the Church, we lengthen the Easter season today to remember him and honor this pivotal event in the lives of all mankind. As Easter in the Northern Hemisphere ushers in an awakening of life following the barrenness of winter, so Christ's resurrection ushers in the blessing of immortality and the possibility of eternal life. His empty tomb proclaims to all the world, "He is not here, but is risen" (Luke 24:6). These words contain all the hope, assurance, and belief necessary to sustain us in our challenging and sometimes grief-filled lives.

Easter is the celebration of the free gift of immortality given to all men, restoring life and healing all wounds. Though all will die as part of the eternal plan of growth and development, nevertheless we can all find comfort in the Psalmist's statement, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm 30:5).

Triumph over physical and spiritual death

It was Job who posed what might be called the question of the ages: "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). Christ's answer rings down through time to this very hour: "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19).

Even with the logic of nature's regeneration and even with the testimony of that empty garden tomb, there are still those who feel the grave is a final destination. But the doctrine of the

Resurrection is the single most fundamental and crucial doctrine in the Christian religion. It cannot be over-emphasized, nor can it be disregarded.

Without the Resurrection, the gospel of Jesus Christ becomes a litany of wise sayings and seemingly unexplainable miracles—but sayings and miracles with no ultimate triumph. No, the ultimate triumph is in the ultimate miracle: for the first time in the history of mankind, one who was dead raised himself into living immortality. He was the Son of God, the Son of our immortal Father in Heaven, and his triumph over physical and spiritual death is the good news every Christian tongue should speak.

Witnesses of the Resurrection

The eternal truth is that Jesus Christ arose from the grave and was the firstfruits of the Resurrection. (See 1 Corinthians 15:23.) The witnesses of this wonderful occurrence cannot be impeached.

Among the chosen witnesses are the Lord's Apostles. Indeed, the call to the holy apostleship is one of bearing witness to the world of the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph Smith said, "The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it" (*History of the Church*, 3:30).

Peter, one of the Apostles chosen by the Master during His ministry, made these statements concerning the role of the Apostles as witnesses of the death and resurrection of Jesus:

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

"But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, . . . and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the

dead; whereof we are witnesses" (Acts 3:14-15).

"And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32).

Apostles as witnesses

The Apostle Paul commented on what Peter had stated about the Apostles being witnesses of the death and resurrection of Jesus. These are his words:

"And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre.

"But God raised him from the dead:

"And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people" (Acts 13:29-31).

On Mars Hill in Athens, Paul said: "[God] hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31), and before King Agrippa he asked this question: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26:8).

Paul bore his apostolic witness of the Resurrection again in his letter to the Saints at Corinth:

"Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? . . . For the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 9:1-2).

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. . . . In Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:20, 22).

Special witnesses of the name of Christ

I humbly testify of my privilege to bear the holy apostleship and to work daily with a modern Quorum of Twelve Apostles who are disciples of the Lord

Jesus Christ. We are to go forth as "special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world" (D&C 107:23). And so have the Apostles always testified.

In our own day, Apostles and prophets are carrying on the work of bearing witness to the world of Jesus Christ. If I may have the privilege, I wish to repeat what President Marion G. Romney, the President of our present apostolic quorum, said concerning the resurrection of Jesus. Not long ago he made this statement to a general conference of the Church:

"At this Easter season, I am grateful for this opportunity to bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus and to set forth, in part at least, the basis upon which that witness rests.

"He is risen; he is not here" (Mark 16:6). These words, eloquent in their simplicity, announced the most significant event of recorded history, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus—an event so extraordinary that even the Apostles, who had been most intimately associated with Jesus in his earthly ministry and who had been carefully taught of the coming event, had difficulty grasping the reality of its full significance. The first accounts which reached their ears 'seemed to them as idle tales' (Luke 24:11) as well they might, for millions of men had lived and died before that day. In every hill and dale men's bodies mouldered in the dust, but until that first Easter morning not one had risen from the grave. . . .

"That the whole of his mortal life moved toward this consummation, he had repeatedly taught. It was foreshadowed in his statement about laying down his life and taking it up again. To the sorrowing Martha he had said, 'I am the resurrection, and the life' (John 11:25); and to the Jews, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up' (John 2:19). . . .

"The evidence that Jesus was resurrected is conclusive" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1982, pp. 5-7; or *Ensign*, May 1982, p. 6).

Apostolic witness of the Resurrection

To the testimony of President Romney and the witnesses of my Brethren, I add my own apostolic witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; that he was born into mortality and fulfilled his ministry as related in the scriptures, which record his birth, his life, his teachings, and his commandments.

In teaching his Apostles, Christ made known to them "that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31). So it was. He was crucified and placed in the tomb. On the third day, he did arise to live again—the Savior of all mankind and the firstfruits of the Resurrection. Through this atoning sacrifice, all men shall be saved from the grave and shall live again. This always has been the testimony of the Apostles, to which I add my witness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Hunter, for that great testimony.

We thank the managers and operators of the many television and radio systems and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience throughout many areas of the world.

The Tabernacle Choir will sing in conclusion "Where Can I Turn for Peace?" The benediction will then be given by Elder Russell C. Taylor of the First Quorum of the Seventy, after which this conference will be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The choir sang "Where Can I Turn for Peace?"

Elder Russell C. Taylor offered the benediction.

FIRST DAY AFTERNOON MEETING

SECOND SESSION

The second general session of the 156th Annual General Conference began at 2:00 P.M. on Saturday, April 5, 1986. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by the combined institute choir from Utah Technical College, LDS Business College, University of Utah, Weber State College, and Utah State University under the direction of Don B. Castleton with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

At the beginning of the meeting, President Thomas S. Monson made the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brethren and sisters, President Ezra Taft Benson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I conduct this session.

We are pleased to welcome those who are gathered here in the Tabernacle for this, the second general session of the 156th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We also welcome those who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and many who are watching in over one thousand stake centers throughout the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico to which the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.