

directed by Stephen Bardsley with John Longhurst at the organ.

President Monson opened this session with the following remarks:

#### **President Thomas S. Monson**

Brethren, President Ezra Taft Benson, who presides at this conference, has asked me to conduct this session. The Tabernacle is filled to overflowing—a beautiful sight. The congregations throughout the world would comprise also a beautiful sight.

We extend our love and best wishes to all of the brethren participating in this session.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to members of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall and in locations in many countries around the world.

We note that Elders Adney Y. Komatsu and Ronald E. Poelman are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders Wm. Grant Bangerter and John H. Groberg are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a returned mission-

ary choir from Brigham Young University under the direction of Stephen Bardsley with John Longhurst at the organ.

We shall begin this service by the choir singing “God of Our Fathers, We Come unto Thee.” Following the singing, Elder Carlos E. Asay, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will offer the invocation.

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The choir sang “God of Our Fathers, We Come unto Thee.”

Elder Carlos E. Asay offered the invocation.

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#### **President Monson**

Thank you, Brother Asay.

The choir will now favor us with “Lord, I Would Follow Thee.” Following the choir number, Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will speak to us.

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The choir sang “Lord, I Would Follow Thee.”

Elder Neal A. Maxwell spoke without further announcement

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## **Elder Neal A. Maxwell**

### **“Called and prepared from the foundation of the world”**

What if in tomorrow’s newspapers and on television scholars excitedly announced that dozens of pages of startling and significant writings, including those of Enoch, Abraham, and Moses, had been found? These startling writings inform us, among many important things, how the Lord tutored Moses, told him of other worlds, and then in regal response told Moses why God created and peopled this planet. (See Moses 1:4–6, 8, 10, 30, 37–39; Isaiah 45:18.) These writings indicate that Abraham and others were chosen in premortal councils, just like Jeremiah,

long before they were born. (See Abraham 3:23; Jeremiah 1:5.) Among this distinguished group was the thirteenth President-to-be of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, President Ezra Taft Benson. In fact, we learn that all faithful men of the priesthood were “called and prepared from the foundation of the world” (Alma 13:3), even though, by secular criteria, such are “the weak things of the earth” (D&C 133:59).

This new information about Enoch is eighteen times that which is in the Bible. Further, we learn from it that a human utopia was once actually achieved, as we receive a portrait of a

special people, the City of Enoch. (See Moses 7:17–19.)

These tremendous discoveries likewise show us that the gospel of Jesus Christ was taught and its ordinances administered in Adam's time, in the dawn of human history. (See Moses 5:58–59.) Furthermore, Adam gathered his righteous posterity together three years before his death. He instructed them, blessed them, and prophesied concerning the future. The Lord even appeared at this very special family gathering. (See D&C 107:53–57.)

### Scriptural “finds”

Given such sobering and liberating discoveries, would not we and many others be deeply impressed and very attentive? Would there not be a stir much, much larger than that which has accompanied the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other ancient writings? The secular world, of course, would pay only passing heed and would quickly return to the pressing cares of the world.

As you already know, these “finds” are but a portion of the abundant Restoration, reflecting the remarkable ministry of the Prophet Joseph Smith, through whom there was such an outpouring. Traversing these truths requires more than a casual stroll up sloping foothills; they take us instead up the breathtaking ridges of reality to an Everest of understanding. On a clear day, we can see forever!

The Bible, in our present format, totals just under sixteen hundred printed pages from multiple authors. To these have been added nearly nine hundred other printed pages of scripture through the Prophet Joseph Smith—more than from all the writings of Moses, Paul, Luke, and Mormon combined, as these are available today—illustrating the quantitative significance of what has come to us through the Restoration.

### Confirmation of premortal existence

Cited in these brief remarks are only a few verses, the equivalent of only three or four printed pages in our current scriptures. But what enormous, qualitative significance is represented!

Before the Restoration, the void was very real. Prior to meeting Joseph Smith, Brigham Young said he would have crawled around the earth on his hands and knees to meet someone like Moses who could tell him anything “about God and heaven” (JD, 8:228). Through Joseph Smith we have additional pages from Moses about God and heaven. We have only to reach to the bookshelf or go to priesthood meeting. Perhaps the way is almost too easy and too simple; we might be more appreciative if on hands and knees. (See 1 Nephi 17:41.) Only by searching the scriptures, not using them occasionally as quote books, can we begin to understand the implications as well as the declarations of the gospel.

For instance, three verses from Alma, advising of premortal preparations and calls, officially broke centuries of silence about mankind's premortal existence. (See Alma 13:3–5.) In 1833, further confirmation came. Not only was Jesus “in the beginning with God,” but “man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be” (D&C 93:29).

We can thus sing “O My Father” (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 292) with real intent and assurances of real belonging.

### The grand goal

In 1832, Jesus, who was seen on this rapturous occasion, was accompanied by a voice bearing record that Jesus had created this and other worlds, whose inhabitants are begotten sons and daughters unto God. (See D&C 76:23–24; John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2.)

Brethren, how can we truly understand who we are unless we know who we were and what we have the power to become? How can there be real identity without real history? How can one understand his tiny, individual plot without knowing, even a little, about Father's grand, galactic plans?

In 1833, information also came indicating that Jesus grew from "grace to grace" until He received a fulness. (See D&C 93:13.) This is so helpful, especially in view of how the Father and the Son have encouraged us, afresh, to become more like them by developing the requisite qualities in our lives. (See Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48; 27:27.) What Jesus taught in His Sermon on the Mount about striving for this grand goal was said in earnest. Moreover, having been advised that we are to become childlike, we are firmly told of the specific attributes needed. (See Matthew 18:3; Mosiah 3:19; Alma 7:23; 13:28.)

In so striving, each man of the priesthood will love his wife and bless his children. He will be a true patriarch, having the authority of example as well as the authority of the holy priesthood.

### **Search, ponder, and live by these precious truths**

We learn from terse verses that we are not helpless and hapless victims of "original sin." We are responsible for our own actual and individual sins, not Adam's, whom the Lord forgave long, long ago. (See Moses 6:53-54; D&C 93:38; Articles of Faith 1:2.) In fact, "because that Adam fell, we are" (Moses 6:48), and "men are, that they might have joy" (2 Nephi 2:25).

Commanded to write of these truths, Moses was also told that many of the things he would write would later be taken away. Nevertheless, these would be "had again" among the children of men in the last days. (See Moses 1:40-41.)

My brethren, these truths are "had again." We possess these precious truths! Now they must come to possess

us! We are to search them, to ponder them, to feel them, and to live by them!

They are not just theological niceties and philosophical footnotes. We need to ponder their implications as well as believe in their declarations regarding daily and eternal life.

### **Chastening, patience, and divine purpose**

One cannot have adequate faith in a Christ whom he does not adequately know, "who is a stranger . . . far from the thoughts and intents of his heart" (Mosiah 5:13). Instead, by laying aside "every weight" of the world and the sins which so "easily beset us," by looking unto Jesus and by feasting upon His words, we will be able to move forward with intellectual and spiritual vigor. Otherwise, as Paul said, we can become wearied and faint in our minds. (See Hebrews 12:1-3; see also 2 Nephi 31:20.) When we understand what was revealed to Adam—"[my] plan of salvation unto all men" (Moses 6:62)—then these doctrines are keenly relevant for tomorrow's trial, Tuesday's temptation, or next month's surge of self-pity. After all, chastening, the trial of our faith, and patience are part of the plan. (See Mosiah 23:21.)

It is all so wondrously Christ-centered. Whether in the structure of the atom or of the galaxies, or in the truths about temples and families, for those who have eyes to see, all things "from the beginning of the world" (2 Nephi 11:4) "bear record of [God]" (Moses 6:63). They are designed to point us to Christ, typifying Him, so that we might follow Him, have faith in Him, and keep His commandments.

If sought by faith (see Romans 9:30-32), these doctrines of the radiant restoration enclose us in divine purpose during our sojourn in this "far country." Like the prodigal son who "came to himself," we thus receive needed perspective and direction as we also begin to "arise and go to [our] Father." (See Luke 15:11-32.)

## Glimpses of the City of God

The initial labor we have to perform with regard to these doctrines is only to look (see 1 Nephi 17:41), firmly averting our gaze from the comparative slums of the secular world, with its grabbiness and grubbiness.

The gospel, in fact, gives us glimpses of the far horizon, revealing a glow from the lights of the City of God. It is a place of happy countenances, where justice and mercy as well as righteousness and truth are constant companions. Herein gentleness and generosity prevail, "without compulsory means" (D&C 121:46). Coarseness and selfishness are unknown, belonging to a previous and primitive place. Here envy would be a sure embarrassment. Neighbors are esteemed as self. This city, where all the residents keep the first and second great commandments, is a community of striking individuals of one heart and of one mind.

We will not be strangers in the City of God. We were there before, when the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy at the prospects of this stern but necessary mortal existence. (See Job 38:4-7.) What we sang then was doubtless an anthem of praise far greater than the "Hallelujah Chorus," more glorious than Moses' and Israel's song after crossing the Red Sea. (See Exodus 15:1-2.)

## Be added upon

Wonder is added to wonder as temples and scriptures tell us of still other worlds—of a universe drenched in divine design, with, as it were, spiritual "cousins" in the cosmos.

When we see things as they really were, really are, and really will be (see Jacob 4:13; D&C 93:24), dispensations are merely seasons, new friendships are but relationships resumed, and prophets sent forth on their errands from the Lord reflect associations

which arc across the ages as they later rendezvous on mountaintops and hills, in woods, fields, groves, and even jails. (See Moses 1:1-2; Matthew 17:1-7; Joseph Smith—History 1:14, 48-50; Acts 23:11.)

We are not now ready for all things the Lord has prepared in the City of God for them that love Him. (See 1 Corinthians 2:9.) Our present eyes are unready for things which they have not yet seen, and our ears are not prepared for the transcending sounds and music of that city.

The trek will be proving and trying. Faith, patience, and obedience are essential (see Mosiah 23:21; Abraham 3:25), but he who completes the journey successfully will be immeasurably added upon (see Abraham 3:26). And he who does not will have subtracted from the sum of his possibilities.

When we arrive home, we shall be weary and bruised. But at last our aching homesicknesses will cease. Meanwhile, our mortal homecomings are but faint foreshadowings of that Homecoming!

## Called in the "there and then" for duties "here and now"

Brethren, these plain and precious doctrines restored in our time through the Prophet Joseph Smith are pulsating with perspective and are so light-intensive, like radioactive materials, that they must be handled with great care.

To life's great questions about identity and meaning come the Restoration's resounding answers. Accompanying these affirming "Yes, yeses!" are the guiding rules or necessary "No, noes!" These restored truths are not mysterious, but wondrous. These truths do not represent the gossip of the galaxies, but, instead, the universe's simple, stunning secrets—such as those God shared with Enoch, Abraham, Moses, and Joseph Smith—a few of which I have noted. Nothing could be more relevant, more resplendent, more true!

"Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!" (see *Hymns*, 1985, no. 27). We are Joseph's spiritual heirs, called ages and ages ago—in the "there and then"—for the duties which await us "here and now!"

### Duties as doers and messengers

Men and young men of the priesthood, let us be about those duties as doers and messengers. The gospel message is worthy of work like that performed by Ether, "from the morning, even until the going down of the sun" (Ether 12:3).

This work is worthy of sacrifice and courage like that of Abinadi. He suffered death by fire, saying that after "I finish my message," then "it matters not" (Mosiah 13:9).

### Doctrinal illiteracy

Doers, said Jesus, will know that these doctrines are of God. (See John 7:17.) Therefore, do not be surprised when nondoers scoff. Do not be surprised, either, if these doctrines un-

settle some. Such was the case when the ancient Apostles filled Jerusalem with their doctrines. (See Acts 5:28.) And when Jesus focused His hearers on doctrines, "they were astonished at his doctrine" (Matthew 22:33). The only cure for the doctrinal illiteracy of those who murmur will be to learn doctrine. (See Isaiah 29:24.)

Given the grandness of the Restoration, "My heart is brim with joy" (Alma 26:11). I apologize for my inability to speak of Jesus as He deserves, being able to speak only "the smallest part which I feel" (Alma 26:16). Yet, even so, "There is music in my soul today, a carol to my King, and Jesus listening can hear, the songs I cannot sing" (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 227).

In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us. President Benson has indicated that I should be your next speaker.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### "Be one"

Whenever I have the privilege to attend this, the general priesthood meeting of the Church, I reflect on the teachings of some of the most noble of God's leaders who have stood at this pulpit and who, from the brilliance of their minds, from the depths of their souls, and from the warmth of their hearts, have given us direction. President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., was such a man. Time and again, his fervent plea was for the priesthood of God to be united. Citing the teachings of Jesus, he inevitably admonished us, "Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine" (D&C 38:27).

### A treasured truth! A profound philosophy!

It was my great privilege to know President Clark rather well. I was his printer. On occasion, he would share with me some of his most intimate thoughts, even those scriptures around which he tailored his teachings and lived his life. Late one evening I delivered some press proofs to his office situated in his home at 80 D Street here in Salt Lake City. President Clark was reading from Ecclesiastes. He was in a quiet and reflective mood. He sat back from his large desk, which was stacked with books and papers. He held the scriptures in his hand, lifted his eyes