

I am aware that Jesus said that they who had seen Him had seen the Father. Could not the same be said by many a son who resembles his parent?

When Jesus prayed to the Father, certainly He was not praying to Himself!

### **Members of the Godhead are perfectly united**

They are distinct beings, but they are one in purpose and effort. They are united as one in bringing to pass the grand, divine plan for the salvation and exaltation of the children of God.

In His great, moving prayer in the Garden before His betrayal, Christ pleaded with His Father concerning the Apostles, whom He loved, saying:

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us" (John 17:20-21).

It is that perfect unity between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost that binds these three into the oneness of the divine Godhead.

Miracle of miracles and wonder of wonders, they are interested in us, and we are the substance of their great concern. They are available to each of us. We approach the Father through the Son. He is our intercessor at the throne of God. How marvelous it is that we may so speak to the Father in the name of the Son.

I bear witness of these great, transcendent truths. I do so by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Lord Accept into Thy Kingdom" and "We Ever Pray for Thee" without announcement.

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### **President Benson**

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Lord Accept into Thy Kingdom" and "We Ever Pray for Thee."

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

## **Elder Neal A. Maxwell**

The holy scriptures represent mankind's spiritual memory. And when man's connection with scripture is severed, mortals are tragically deprived of an awareness of spiritual history, blinding the eyes of faith. Thereby shorn of true identity, mortals keep their legs intact, but each walks in his own way. Their arms are acquisitive, but do not reach out in an understanding embrace of life. Their ears function, but they no longer hear the word of the Lord. Though created in God's image, those thus severed soon forget their Maker. Yet it is not surprising, "For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the

thoughts and intents of his heart?" (Mosiah 5:13).

### **"God will yet reveal many great and important things"**

By contrast, one of the unique features of the living Church of Jesus Christ is its ever-expanding body of fundamental spiritual knowledge about man's identity and purpose, which enlarges "the memory of this people" (Alma 37:8). In fact, our ninth article of faith declares that God "will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." Thus nourished by a menu blending antiquity and futurity, Church mem-

bers need never "faint in [their] minds" (Hebrews 12:3). Instead, we can be intellectually vibrant.

Lost books are among the treasures yet to come forth. Over twenty of these are mentioned in the existing scriptures. Perhaps most startling and voluminous will be the records of the lost tribes of Israel (see 2 Nephi 29:13). We would not even know of the impending third witness for Christ except through the precious Book of Mormon, the second witness for Christ! This third set of sacred records will thus complete a triad of truth. Then, just as the Perfect Shepherd has said, "My word also shall be gathered in one" (v. 14). There will be "one fold and one shepherd" (1 Nephi 22:25) in a welding together of all the Christian dispensations of human history (see D&C 128:18).

Whereas previous prophets were sometimes left to surmise — as Moroni supposed the Jews also had a record of the Creation from Adam on down (see Ether 1:3) — ours, instead, is a time of fulness, including "things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world" (D&C 128:18). Moreover, "and the day cometh that the words of the book which were sealed shall be read upon the house tops; and they shall be read by the power of Christ; and all things shall be revealed unto the children of men which ever have been among the children of men, and which ever will be even unto the end of the earth" (2 Nephi 27:11; see also 2 Nephi 30:16, 18; Ether 4:7; D&C 101:32, 121:28).

Thus, just as there will be many more Church members, families, wards, stakes, and temples — later on, there will also be many more nourishing and inspiring scriptures. However, we must first feast worthily upon that which we already have!

### **Scriptures essential to belief in God and his plan**

Without this precious, spiritual perspective, the human family is sel-

dom more than one generation away from deep doubt and even disbelief. Laman and Lemuel doubted and murmured because, wrote Nephi, "they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them" (1 Nephi 2:12); they were provincial, just like forgetful Israel: "and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel" (Judges 2:10; see also Deuteronomy 32:6, Mosiah 10:14).

If people are without the truths of God's plan of salvation for very long, some may not even "believe [these truths] when they are taught" (Mosiah 1:5). An untaught "rising generation" comes not to "believe . . . concerning the resurrection, . . . neither . . . the coming of Christ" (Mosiah 26:1-2). Belief in Deity and in the resurrection are usually the first to go: "they had brought no records with them; and they denied the being of their Creator" (Omni 1:17).

Our loving Father is ever anxious to dispel such ignorance:

"And after God had appointed that these things should come unto man, behold, then he saw that it was expedient that man should know concerning the things whereof he had appointed unto them;

"Therefore he sent angels to converse with them. . . .

" . . . And made known unto them the plan of redemption, which had been prepared from the foundation of the world; and this he made known unto them according to their faith and repentance and their holy works" (Alma 12:28-30).

The message is ever constant and ever relevant:

"Is it not as necessary that the plan of redemption should be made known unto this people as well as unto their children?

"Is it not as easy at this time for the Lord to send his angel to declare these glad tidings unto us as unto our children, or as after the time of his coming?" (Alma 39:18-19).

### Revelation necessary to understand God's plan

Today's mortals, born long "after the time of his [first] coming," surely need to know of the plan, which gives, said the Prophet Joseph Smith, "a comprehensive view of our condition and true relation to God." The Prophet said this subject should be studied "more than any other, . . . day and night" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 324).

God's plan, however, is not something to be deduced by logic alone, nor is human experience deep enough or long enough to inform us adequately. It requires revelation from God.

"Behold, great and marvelous are the works of the Lord. How unsearchable are the depths of the mysteries of him; and it is impossible that man should find out all his ways. And no man knoweth of his ways save it be revealed unto him; wherefore, brethren, despise not the revelations of God" (Jacob 4:8).

How else would we really know the truth of who we really were, "really are, and . . . really will be"? (Jacob 4:13; see also D&C 93:24). There can be no true felicity without true identity.

Therefore, the process of revelation typically involves angels and prophets (see Alma 12:28–29). Several times in the closing period of his life, Joseph Smith noted the fourteen years of particularly intensive revelation which he had experienced, including angelic visitations (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 349, 360; *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, comp. Dean C. Jessee [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984], p. 407).

### Importance of this dispensation's revelations

The Restoration's Messiah-centered scriptures expand mankind's spiritual memory significantly and further educate

us concerning the unfolding of God's plan ever since the world began. The Restoration has provided sweeping sermons about God's plan with its rescuing Redeemer, such as from Moses, Abinadi, Ether, Alma, Ammon, and Aaron (see Mosiah 13:33–35; Ether 13:2–14; Alma 12:30–33, 18:36–39, 22:12–14). These answer the rhetorical question of one prophet who said, "Why not speak of the atonement of Christ?" (Jacob 4:12). Brothers and sisters, given man's true self-interest, why should we really speak much of anything else?

### Read scriptures with a believing attitude

He who truly searches the scriptures will surely see how they testify of Christ (see John 5:39). He will also see how interactive and cross-supportive the scriptures are. If some see not, it will be "because they sought it not by faith" (Romans 9:32), but instead stared uncomprehendingly with slit-eyed skepticism. Said Jesus to the unseeing:

"For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.

"But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:46–47).

Those who understood and believed not *that* which Moses wrote did not, in effect, believe *this* which Jesus spoke. This episode underscores the important words of Mormon about the relationship of the biblical record and the Book of Mormon:

"For behold, *this* is written for the intent that ye may believe *that*; and if ye believe *that* ye will believe *this* also."

Mutually supportive, the scriptures produce much-needed historical perspective "concerning your fathers, and also the marvelous works which were wrought by the power of God among them" (Mormon 7:9; italics added).

### Scriptures reveal God's purposes

The various scriptures tell us vital things about God's "tender mercies" (1 Nephi 1:20, Ether 6:12; see also Luke 1:78) and His dealings with our predecessors. What is past is truly prologue; hence an unvarying, all-seeing God, desiring to save mercurial and myopic man, is not interested in our retroactive adulation, but in preventing our prospective ruin.

Thus, it is from the scriptures that we learn of God's plans for mankind on this planet. He told us, through Isaiah, that He formed this earth to be inhabited (see Isaiah 45:18). Through Moses, God described His purpose: "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). Furthermore, by viewing the heavens and the galaxies, those who have eyes to see will see "God moving in his majesty and power" (D&C 88:47).

We are thus enveloped in a planned universe, and we live on a purposeful planet; and these truths describe "things as they really are" (Jacob 4:13). No wonder the gospel is such glorious and good news!

### Scriptures provide "precious perspective"

If ever a generation needed this precious perspective, our severed generation does. If ever a generation needed to be saved from itself, ours does. Surely these needs will intensify as the bewildered and beset nations of the earth, as foreseen by Jesus, wallow hopelessly in distress, "with perplexity" (Luke 21:25).

In fact, we misread and misuse life — except with this plain and precious perspective of the gospel, which puts the things of the world in their lesser places. Then, on that essentially unchanging mortal stage, we can see things for what they really are, such as the demanding cadence called for by the cares of the world. Like birds and animals performing some inborn ritual, amusing to everyone but the partici-

pants, these maneuverings of materialism would be comedy if they were not tragedy. So would the posturings as to power and the thirsty seeking of the praise of the world. The ploys are so transparent when seen in the gospel's light.

### Share in God's attributes to share in his power

Nevertheless, why are the ways of the world felt even by serious disciples so insistently and so incessantly? Could it be that in the far distant, pre-mortal past, having admired the Father and having seen His glory, we now unconsciously envy His glory? Yet, if we really wish to share in His kingdom, why do we sternly resist what the revelations tell us of the required preparatory schooling and the risks of unrighteous power? God's ultimate power is safe, precisely because He possesses ultimate love, justice, mercy, and knowledge. We cannot share in His power without sharing in His attributes.

But, we may say, do we not have His spiritual genes? Yes, but we do not have His gentleness.

Yet we are of His spiritual lineage! Yes, but we do not have His capacity to love.

Surely, we belong to Him! Of course, but we cannot reenter His house until our behavior would let us feel at home.

### Importance of prophetic utterances

No wonder the prophets are repetitious in their warnings. After all, if one were permitted only a few surviving lines to family, friends, and posterity, those might be headlines. Sometimes what comes is almost a warning shout, especially when hearers are unstirred by the still, small voice (see Jacob 6:8-13, Moroni 10:27-34).

Besides, the prophets, who are the major makers of our spiritual memory, saw not only their own times, but ours as well; they have communicated with us as

if we were present, for "behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing" (Mormon 8:35).

Little wonder that Joseph Smith, in his last witnessing words from Carthage Jail the night before he was slain, bore "powerful testimony to the guards of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the Gospel, the administration of angels" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 383; see also Alma 9:21, 12:29, 19:34).

Without the prophets, the scriptures, how else would we really know about what "God had appointed . . . unto man . . . the plan of redemption?" (Alma 12:28, 30).

When searched, the scriptural truths of the unfolding plan of salvation are both electrifying and subduing. Gratefully pondered, they lead to lyrical expressions, such as in the 1842 litany by the Prophet Joseph Smith: "And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an angel from heaven, declaring the fulfillment of the prophets — the book to be revealed. A voice of the Lord in the wilderness . . . declaring the three witnesses to bear record of the book! The voice of Michael on the banks of the Susquehanna! . . . The voice of Peter, James, and John in the wilderness . . . declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fulness of times!" (D&C 128:20).

### **A crescendo of revelations to precede Christ's coming**

Future revelations, brothers and sisters, will include astounding events as well as great and important truths. So much so, that Moses' and Israel's exulting song after safely crossing the

Red Sea (see Exodus 15) and the Prophet Joseph's 1842 litany will gladly give way to the crescendo of glorious events associated with Christ's coming in majesty and power.

The valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman will ring again — this time with the sounds of dispensational reunion, as it glows with gathering! (See Daniel 7:13–14; D&C 107:53–57, 116:1.) Those of Enoch's utterly unique city of "one heart" will greet those of the New Zion with holy embraces and holy kisses amid the sounds of sweet sobbing! (See Moses 7:62–63.) The "hills shall tremble" at the presence of the lost tribes, and hearts, as well as ice, will melt, as they come "filled with songs of everlasting joy" (see D&C 133:26–33).

And it will all occur at the direction of the "Redeemer of Israel, our only delight." Hence, "as children of Zion, good tidings for us, . . . the hour of redemption is near" (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 6).

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Benson**

We have just heard from Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Redeemer of Israel," following which we shall hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, who was sustained yesterday as a new member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin spoke without further announcement.

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## **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin**

### **Pledge of commitment**

My beloved brethren and sisters, in all humility and gratitude I ask for

your prayers and your faith in this great and humbling and sacred assignment that has been given me. To our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and to Presi-