

### President Thomas S. Monson

President Ezra Taft Benson, who has presided at all sessions of this conference, has asked that I conduct this fifth and concluding session of the 157th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend a sincere welcome to all assembled in the Tabernacle and to those seated in the Assembly Hall, where Elders F. Enzo Busche and J. Richard Clarke are seated on the stand. We also send our greetings and blessing to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, with Jerold Ottley directing and Robert Cundick at the organ, will begin this service by singing "Come, Rejoice." The invoca-

tion then will be offered by Elder Jacob de Jager of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Come, Rejoice."  
Elder Jacob de Jager offered the invocation.

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### President Monson

The choir will now sing "I Am a Child of God." We invite the congregation to sing with the choir when directed to do so by Brother Ottley. Following the singing, Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

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The choir and congregation sang "I Am a Child of God."

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## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

### Be settled in doing the will of God

Events and circumstances in the last days make it imperative for us as members of the Church to become more grounded, rooted, established, and settled (see Colossians 1:23, 2:7; 2 Peter 1:12). Jesus said to His disciples, "Settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you" (JST, Luke 14:28). If not so settled, the turbulence will be severe. If settled, we will not be "tossed to and fro," whether by rumors, false doctrines, or by the behavioral and intellectual fashions of the world. Nor will we get caught up in the "talk show" mentality, spending our time like ancient Athenians "in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing" (Acts 17:21). Why be concerned with the passing preferences of the world anyway? "For the fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Corinthians 7:31).

### Be settled about Jesus

However, we cannot be thus settled in doing what Jesus has commanded *unless* we are first settled about Him. If Jesus were only a man, albeit a very good man, His counsel is merely that of a meridian moralist. It is quite another thing, however, for the Creator of multiple worlds, whose central concern is our individual happiness, to command, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Our task, therefore, is to "reconcile [ourselves] to the will of God, and not to the will of . . . the flesh" (2 Nephi 10:24).

### Some members are not settled

The poet-prophet Jacob witnessed among Church members how covenant-breaking wounded "delicate minds" and how hearts were "pierced with deep wounds" (Jacob 2:9, 35). He was

"weighed down" and so heavy with sorrow because some members esteemed their covenants so lightly (v. 3). As I witness some of today's walking wounded, I understand Jacob's feelings as never before!

Some Church members, alas, are neither reconciled to the will of God nor are they sufficiently settled as to their covenants.

Some unworthily covenant afresh, partaking of the broken bread while having broken their covenants of marriage.

Some give of their time yet withhold themselves, being present without giving of their presence and going through the superficial motions of membership instead of the deep emotions of consecrated discipleship.

Some try to get by with knowing only the headlines of the gospel, not really talking much of Christ or rejoicing in Christ and esteeming lightly His books of scripture which contain and explain His covenants (see 2 Nephi 25:26).

Some are so proud they never learn of obedience and spiritual submissiveness. They will have very arthritic knees on the day when every knee shall bend. There will be no gallery then to play to; all will be participants!

Maintaining Church membership on our own terms, therefore, is not true discipleship.

### **The nature of true discipleship**

Real disciples absorb the fiery darts of the adversary by holding aloft the quenching shield of faith with one hand, while holding to the iron rod with the other (see Ephesians 6:16, 1 Nephi 15:24, D&C 27:17). There should be no mistaking; it will take both hands!

Real disciples are also, precept by precept and experience by experience, becoming ever more like the Master they serve. We can neither be the woman nor the "man of Christ"

(Helaman 3:29) unless we are coming to have the "mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). This process can happily include, wrote Paul, those once "alienated and enemies in [their] mind" (Colossians 1:21; see Philippians 2:5). We can be so clever, like the adversary, and still not know the mind of God (see Moses 4:6).

We can be "ever learning" and yet allow the everlasting truths to get lost in life's shuffle as in this lamentation:

*Where is the Life we have lost in living?*

*Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?*

*Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?*

(T. S. Eliot, "Choruses from 'The Rock,'" in *The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950* [New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1971], p. 96)

### **Prophets, scriptures, and covenants**

To help us become true disciples, the Lord has given us prophets and scriptures to strengthen us, "to prepare the weak for those things which are coming on the earth, and for the Lord's errand in the day when . . . by the weak things of the earth the Lord shall thrash the nations by the power of his Spirit" (D&C 133:58-59).

Feasting upon the fulness of the gospel will help us to overcome. Additionally, if we will keep our covenants, the covenants will keep us spiritually safe.

One day, and why not soon, the people of the Church will fulfill this prophecy: "The power of the Lamb of God . . . descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, . . . the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory" (1 Nephi 14:14).

However, our collective light does not yet shine brightly enough to be "a standard for the nations" (D&C 115:5).

### Disciples deny themselves the appetites of the flesh

The Church would grow much faster now, numerically and spiritually, if it were not for the wickedness of the world (see 1 Nephi 14:12). It would also grow much faster if you and I were better by taking up the Christian cross daily (see Luke 9:23). Part of taking up the cross is denying ourselves the lusts and appetites of the flesh. "For it is better," the resurrected Jesus said, "that ye should deny yourselves of these things, wherein ye will take up your cross" (3 Nephi 12:30).

Thus, the *daily* taking up of the cross means *daily* denying ourselves the appetites of the flesh.

By emulating the Master, who endured temptations but "gave no heed unto them," we, too, can live in a world filled with temptations "such as [are] common to man" (1 Corinthians 10:13). Of course Jesus noticed the tremendous temptations that came to him, but He did not process and reprocess them. Instead, He rejected them promptly. If we entertain temptations, soon they begin entertaining us! Turning these unwanted lodgers away at the doorstep of the mind is one way of giving "no heed." Besides, these would-be lodgers are actually barbarians who, if admitted, can be evicted only with great trauma.

In a decaying environment, the mind is the last redoubt of righteousness, and it must be preserved even amid bombardment by evil stimuli. Christ is competent to see us through, "for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18).

As promised, He will make either "a way to escape" or a way "to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

### Keep covenants

We surely have been warned and forewarned about our time, a period in which the compression of challenges may make a year seem like a decade.

Members will be cleverly mocked and scorned by those in the "great and spacious building," representing the pride of the world (1 Nephi 8:26, 11:36). No matter, for ere long, He who was raised on the third day will raze that spacious but third-class hotel!

Ours will be a time of great inversion as well as perversion, as some will call good evil and evil good (see Isaiah 5:20, 2 Nephi 15:20, D&C 64:16, 2 Nephi 2:5). Others, in their ignorance of spiritual truths, will "speak evil of those things which they know not" (Jude 1:10; see 2 Peter 2:12).

Peace has already been taken from the earth (see D&C 1:35). Nation will rise against nation (see Matthew 24:7). It will also be a time of hardening as the love of many waxes cold and iniquity abounds (see D&C 45:27). Secular bewilderment will be epidemic amid the "distress of nations, with perplexity" (Luke 21:25) as various vexations will mock man's cosmetic remedies:

*How small, of all that human hearts endure,*

*That part which laws or kings can cause or cure!*

(Samuel Johnson, Lines added to Goldsmith's *Traveller*, in *Familiar Quotations*, comp. John Bartlett [Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1968], p. 428).

We cannot expect to live in such a world without experiencing certain consequences of these conditions. Yet we can always keep our covenants, even if we cannot keep such conditions from coming.

### The spiritually settled will overcome

The Lord, who knows all that through which we will pass, will help us to overcome in our "small moment" of time (D&C 122:4). If we are settled, we will "endure it well" (D&C 121:8) and "hold fast" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Endured righteously, "all these things shall give [us] experience, and shall be for [our] good" (D&C 122:7). "Think it not strange" when disciples are called

upon to pass through "the fiery trial," said Peter (1 Peter 4:12).

Even so, the Saints of God, as prophesied, will eventually "cry unto the Lord day and night until deliverance comes" (*Prophetic Sayings of Heber C. Kimball*, n.p., n.d., p. 6).

The spiritually settled will finally overcome, and the glorious promise is, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Revelation 3:21).

### Perfection is a sacred process

Meanwhile, let us remember "what manner of persons [we] ought . . . to be" (2 Peter 3:11, 3 Nephi 27:27). Attributively, we are to become even as Jesus, with His virtues being increasingly replicated in our lives. Even in the midst of our obvious imperfections, a sacred process is to be underway—if slowly, nevertheless resolutely. Whatever one's unfolding agendum, he can be *overcoming* if he is *becoming* more like Christ!

### Cast your cares upon Christ

Even though scarred by the past, if we are contrite, Jesus' promise is, "I shall heal them" (3 Nephi 18:32). Such shall become "alive again" (Luke 15:32) "in Christ because of [their] faith" (2 Nephi 25:25). As part of His infinite atonement, Jesus knows "according to the flesh" all that through which we pass. (Alma 7:11–12). He has borne the sins, griefs, sorrows, and, declared Jacob, the pains of every man, woman, and child (see 2 Nephi 9:21). Having been perfected in His empathy, Jesus thus knows how to succor us.

We can, therefore, actually do as Peter urged and cast our cares upon the Lord (see 1 Peter 5:7); He is familiar with them, including even the feeling of being forsaken (see Mark 14:50, 15:34). Nothing is beyond His redeeming reach or His encircling empathy. Therefore, we should not complain

about our own life's not being a rose garden when we remember who wore the crown of thorns!

### Become and overcome through the atonement of Christ

I turn now to the conclusion of Jesus' mortal Messiahship. Luke reported Jesus' sweating in Gethsemane "as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44). This fact is fully validated in the "other books" of restoration scripture (1 Nephi 13:39–40): "Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, . . . to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink" (D&C 19:18).

The necessary but awesome shedding of Jesus' blood thus occurred not only in the severe scourging, but earlier in Gethsemane. A recent and thoughtful article by several physicians on the physical death of Jesus Christ indicates that "the severe scourging, with its intense pain and appreciable blood loss, most probably left Jesus in a preshock state." (We all recall, of course, that a dramatically weakened Jesus needed help to carry the cross.) "Therefore, even before the actual crucifixion, Jesus' physical condition was at least serious and possibly critical. . . . Although scourging may have resulted in considerable blood loss, crucifixion per se was a relatively bloodless procedure" ("On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 21 Mar. 1986, pp. 1458, 1461).

In addition to the consequences of scourging, how Christ's lifeblood had already flowed in Gethsemane! Remember, he suffered "both body and spirit" (D&C 19:18). Declared King Benjamin, Christ would suffer "even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish" (Mosiah 3:7).

Having bled at every pore, how red His raiment must have been in Gethsemane, how crimson that cloak!

No wonder, when Christ comes in power and glory, that He will come in reminding red attire (see D&C 133:48), signifying not only the winepress of wrath, but also to bring to our remembrance how He suffered for each of us in Gethsemane and on Calvary!

In recent years, as I have sung the hymns of the Atonement, it has been with an especially full heart—and also with full voice, when I can continue to sing—lines such as “How great thou art,” “I scarce can take it in,” “To rescue a soul so rebellious and proud as mine,” “I stand all amazed,” and “Oh, it is wonderful!” (*Hymns* [1985], nos. 86, 193).

Now, my brothers and sisters, let not Jesus’ redemption for us stop at the immortalizing dimension of the Atonement, “the loosing of the bands of death” (Alma 11:41). Let us grasp the proffered gift of eternal life! We will end up either choosing Christ’s

manner of living or His manner of suffering! It is either “suffer even as I” (D&C 19:16–17), or overcome “even as [He] . . . overcame” (Revelation 3:21). His beckoning command is to become “even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27). The spiritually settled accept that invitation, and “through the atonement of Christ,” they *become and overcome!* (see Mosiah 3:18, 19).

In this unsettled world, may we settle in our hearts on this determination, I pray 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.

We shall now hear from Elder Paul H. Dunn of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

## Elder Paul H. Dunn

Near here stands a tall building twenty-six stories high. In it are two banks of elevators, one an express, one that moves a little more normally.

Not long ago I got on the express elevator. Some of the workers there say it could qualify as a ride at Disneyland. A little boy and his father got on with me. Suddenly the elevator took off, and the little boy, not expecting the thrill, lost his breath and looked up at his dad with great faith and trust and said, “Daddy, does Heavenly Father know we’re coming?”

There is a great lesson in that experience.

### Stress the positive

Dr. JoAnn Larsen, a Salt Lake City family therapist, recently gave some wise and practical counsel on teaching children and building their self-esteem. She reminded us of the tendency most parents have, in their

efforts to teach their children responsibility, of so often stressing the negative things the children do—the mistakes and misjudgments they make and the inconveniences and trouble they cause. She made the statement that between birth and twenty years of age the average child hears from parents, teachers, siblings, and peers probably one hundred thousand negative messages, which are rarely balanced with positive messages. With an extremely lucky child, the ratio would probably be ten negatives to one positive, which she claims can be highly damaging, often for life, to a child’s feelings of self-worth.

She encourages us all to develop lenses—vision that sees positives instead of negatives, thus making it possible to perform miracles sometimes and certainly to greatly improve the results of our teaching efforts and our parent-child relationships. The good accomplished toward the making of