

Women; and sisters Janette C. Hales, Virginia H. Pearce, and Patricia P. Pinegar were sustained as the new Young Women General Presidency.

The singing during this session will be furnished by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from the Orem Utah Region, under the direction of Brother Stanley Zenk, with Brother John Longhurst at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing "As Zion's Youth in Latter Days." Following the singing, Elder F. Burton Howard of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "As Zion's Youth in Latter Days."

Elder F. Burton Howard offered the invocation.

President Monson

Thank you, Brother Howard. Brother Howard presides as the Area President of the Mexico Area of the Church.

The choir will now favor us with "God of Our Fathers, We Come unto Thee." Following the choir number, Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us.

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

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

"My servant Joseph"

My focus, in a few headlines, will be on the remarkable man whom the Lord repeatedly and affectionately called "my servant Joseph" (D&C 5:7). What followed Joseph Smith's prayer in the spring of 1820 irrevocably illuminated our view of God, ourselves, others, life, even the universe! A young boy in a small grove of trees began receiving answers to mankind's oldest and largest questions! But young Joseph certainly did not go into the Sacred Grove seeking the restoration of the holy priesthood and the holy endowment, the sealing power, and all the keys thereof. He did not even know of their existence! He merely wanted to know which of several churches to join. His prayer was for personal and tactical guidance. The response, however, was of global and eternal significance!

Joseph Smith's courage

Would Joseph have gone into the grove, brethren, if he had known beforehand the unceasing persecution which would soon engulf him and finally cause his martyrdom?

Courage is one of Joseph Smith's special qualities. Without it, he would have shrunk from carrying out his remarkable role. At about age seven, he had a gravely infected leg. Amputation seemed inevitable. He refused alcoholic anesthetics when his leg bones were surgically and painfully treated in a new technique. By the way, that thoughtful little boy asked his mother to leave the room so she wouldn't have to witness his suffering.

For Joseph's ailment, the best medical help available in America was surprisingly just a few miles away: Dr. Nathan Smith, founder of Dartmouth's medical school and the experienced pioneer of this advanced technique

(see Le Roy S. Wirthlin, "Joseph Smith's Boyhood Operation: An 1813 Surgical Success," *Brigham Young University Studies*, spring 1981, pp. 131-54; see also "Joseph Smith's Surgeon," *Ensign*, Mar. 1978, pp. 59-60). He led the team who saved Joseph's leg, including for the grueling march of Zion's Camp.

Joseph often displayed courage, as one beneficiary later reported: "Sickness and fright had robbed me of strength. Joseph had to decide w[he]ther to leave me to be captured by the mob or endanger himself by rendering aid. Choosing the latter course, he lifted me upon his own broad shoulders and bore me with occasional rests through the swamp and darkness. Several hours later we emerged upon the lonely road and soon reached safety. Joseph's . . . strength permitted him to [save] my life" (in Carl Arrington, "Brother Joseph," *New Era*, Dec. 1973, p. 19).

The glorious and the laborious

Joseph's courage was matched by his willingness to be tutored. The Restoration, which occurred "in process of time" (Moses 7:21), so required. After a glorious visitation, there would be laborious implementation. For instance, the bestowal of the golden plates, history's most stunning "find" in the field of religion, was followed by painstaking translation. The keys of the holy apostleship were dramatically restored, but well before the sifting march of Zion's Camp and the subsequent calling of the Twelve. Elijah's very significant visit came well before either the people or temples were prepared to enjoy the restored sealing power.

Yes, Joseph received remarkable manifestations, along with constant vexations. True, for instance, there were periodic arrivals of heavenly messengers, but these were punctuated by the periodic arrivals of earthly mobs.

While Joseph was befriended by heavenly notables, he was also be-

trayed by some of his earthly friends. Receiving keys and gifts was real, but so was the painful loss of six of the eleven children born to him and Emma. Granted, Joseph had revealed to him glimpses of far horizons—the first and third estates. But these periodic glories occurred amid Joseph's arduous daily life in the second estate.

Consecrated Joseph gave so much, yet often so little was returned. President Brigham Young lamented: "There was confidence due from his brethren to Joseph which he did not receive. In his death they learned a profitable lesson, and afterwards felt that if he could only be restored to them how obedient they would be to his counsels" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 10:222).

I recall reading years ago that, during severe apostasy in Kirtland, Joseph shook someone's hand for what seemed to be a long time. Discerningly, the Prophet then said he was glad to know that individual was his friend because he had so few of them in those days.

Seer, translator, and revelator

Joseph was a seer. He had the gift to translate ancient records (see *History of the Church*, 1:238), and a "seer is greater than a prophet" (Mosiah 8:15; see 8:13-17).

The process of translation was truly "a marvellous work and a wonder," or, as rendered in Hebrew, "a miraculous miracle" (Isaiah 29:14). Depending upon his sequence of translation, scholars estimate that Joseph in 1829 was translating at a rapid daily equivalent of from eight to thirteen of today's printed pages (see John W. Welch and Tim Rathbone, "The Translation of the Book of Mormon: Basic Historical Information" [Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1986], pp. 38-39). An able, professional translator recently told me he considers one page a day productive.

From Joseph the translator—untrained in theology—more printed pages of scripture have come down to us than from any other mortal, as Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has calculated!

Joseph, the revelator. He also became an articulator. President Young said the Prophet Joseph had the “happy faculty” of communicating things “often in a single sentence throwing . . . light into the gloom of [the] ages . . . in one blending flood of heavenly intelligence” (Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:310).

Joseph Smith lit up life’s landscape, brethren, so that we can see “things as they really are, and . . . really will be” (Jacob 4:13). The revelations about the dispensations in salvational history tell us that Adam had the fullness of Christ’s gospel and all its ordinances (see Moses 5:58–59). Hence, Christianity did not begin with Jesus’ mortal messiahship in the meridian of time in Jerusalem! The diffusion which followed Adam naturally resulted in some similarities in various religions. Therefore, as Elder Joseph F. Smith declared, we find “relics of Christianity” which “date back . . . beyond the flood, independent of . . . the Bible” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 15:325). Latter-day Saints are therefore unsurprised but instead are enriched whenever discoveries are made which show how the Lord grants “unto all nations” to teach a portion of “his word” (Alma 29:8).

In 1834 all the priesthood in the Kirtland area met, not in a tabernacle but in a small log cabin. There, Joseph prophesied that the Church would eventually grow to fill North and South America and even the world (see Wilford Woodruff, *Millennial Star*, 19 Sept. 1892, p. 605; see also Conference Report, Apr. 1898, p. 57). Think of it, brethren—tonight we have live audiences in over three thousand separate congregations involving 162,000 men and young men! Later, videos will reach tens of thousands more in forty-

seven countries and seventeen languages!

Even so, young men listening tonight, including several of my grandsons, will aid in the further fulfillment of Joseph’s bold prophecy, for “the ends of the earth shall inquire after [Joseph’s] name” (D&C 122:1). And young men listening tonight will answer those inquiries in the years ahead and in places with strange-sounding names.

Another remarkable prophecy, given nearly thirty years before the tragedy of the American Civil War, foretold not only where it would begin, but, more importantly, that it would end “in the death and misery of many souls” (D&C 87:1). By far, that war still ranks as America’s bloodiest.

Other prophecies await. Some are grim, such as “a desolating sickness shall cover the land” (D&C 45:31). How its awful fulfillment will occur, we do not know.

When they first met, Joseph also prophesied that Brigham Young would one day preside over the Church (see *Millennial Star*, 11 July 1863, p. 439).

Brigham Young was not easily impressed by anybody, yet he said he felt like shouting “Hallelujah!” all the time that he ever knew Joseph Smith! (in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:51). And dying Brigham’s last words were, “Joseph! Joseph! Joseph!” He was about to be with his beloved Joseph once again! (in Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985], p. 399).

Joseph’s spiritual submissiveness

Joseph could not have accomplished what he did if he had not become consecrated and spiritually submissive. Elder Erastus Snow warned the rest of us that when we are “inclined to be stiff and refractory, . . . the Spirit of the Lord is held at a distance from us” because we are too busy grati-

fyng our own wills, and thus we “interpose a barrier” between us and God (in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:352).

Near the end, in multiple meetings, Joseph transferred the keys, authority, and ordinances to the Twelve. On one such occasion, President Wilford Woodruff said the revelator’s “face was as clear as amber and he was covered with a power [I have] never seen in [an instant] in the flesh before” (in *Journal History*, 12 Mar. 1897). President Young said that those who knew Joseph could tell when “the Spirit of revelation was upon him, . . . for at such times there was a peculiar clearness and transparency in his face” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:89).

Even with all he revealed, however, the Prophet Joseph knew much more than he could tell. President John Taylor observed that Joseph “felt fettered and bound” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 10:148). Heber C. Kimball confirmed that Joseph sometimes felt “as though he were enclosed . . . ; there was no room for him to expand, . . . no room in the hearts of the people to receive” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 10:233).

The Prophet Joseph was a very good man. We need not suppose him “guilty of any great or malignant sins,” for such, he said, “was never in my nature” (Joseph Smith—History 1:28). Near the end of his life, he meekly said, “I never told you I was perfect; but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 368).

Unsurprisingly, the Prophet was closely linked with previous prophets! Just as on the Mount of Transfiguration Peter, James, and John were given priesthood keys by Elias, the Prophet Joseph likewise received priesthood keys from Elias and also from Peter, James, and John and so many others! In a December 1834 blessing, Father Smith confirmed to his son that ancient

Joseph in Egypt “looked after his posterity in the last days . . . [and] sought diligently to know . . . who should bring forth the word of the Lord [to them] and his eyes beheld thee, my son [Joseph Smith, Jr.]: [and] his heart rejoiced and his soul was satisfied” (*Patriarchal Blessings*, 1:3).

Joseph’s suffering

Concerning his personal suffering, Joseph was promised, “Thy heart shall be enlarged.” An enlarged Joseph wrote from Liberty Jail, “It seems to me that my heart will always be more tender after this than ever it was before. . . . I think I never could have felt as I now do if I had not suffered” (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984], pp. 386–87). Was Joseph not told, “All these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good”? (D&C 122:7).

Revelations about the Atonement

Most significantly, through the Prophet Joseph came translations and revelations which confirmed and described, as never before, the reality of the glorious Atonement, in which, alas, so few really believe today. It is the central act of all human history! Very few words have come directly from Jesus about His specific and personal suffering during that agonizing but emancipating atonement. Almost all of these precious few words come to us through the Prophet Joseph! Jesus truly did bleed at every pore. He trembled because of pain. He suffered both body and spirit. He pled that He might not shrink, or pull back, from performing the Atonement. He finally finished His preparations unto the children of men. Meek Jesus let His will be “swallowed up in the will of the Father”! (Mosiah 15:7). Even in the midst of His astonishing, personal triumph,

Jesus, true to His premortal promise, still gave all the glory to the Father (see D&C 19:18–19; Moses 4:2).

Be men of Christ

The Prophet's life was thus one of high achievement amid deep disappointment. Brethren, how will we endure our own peaks and valleys? Will we so submit individually, or will we be "stiff and refractory"?

Joseph became fully consecrated and grew in a "spiritual crescendo." Will we do the same, brethren, by witnessing to our families, friends, and flocks—not only through our verbal testimonies but also by our developmental examples? We can do this by becoming ever more visibly the men of Christ!

Or will we be like those who were decent but who lacked the courage to declare openly for Jesus and who were afraid of losing their places in the synagogue? (see John 12:42–43). There are so many equivalent situations today, and some Church members are reluctant to risk losing their places! Each day we decide the degree of our discipleship. Each day we answer the question, "Who's on the Lord's side? Who?"

Now, my brethren, "these are [your] days" (Helaman 7:9) in the history of the Church. Mark well what kind of days they will be, days when, with special visibility, the Lord will "make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations" (D&C 133:3). God will also "hasten" His work (D&C 88:73). He will also "shorten" the last days "for the elect's sake" (Matthew 24:22); hence, there will be a compression of events (see Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:20). Furthermore, "all things shall be in commotion" (D&C 88:91). Only those in the process of becoming the men and women of Christ will be able to keep their spiritual balance. Brethren, may we "walk by faith" and, if necessary, even on our knees! In the name of the Lord of the universe, even Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

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

Elder Carlos E. Asay, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone of the Seventy.

Elder Carlos E. Asay

A young man of deacon age reported:

"I feel a lot of pressure from my friends to smoke and steal and things like that. . . . My best friends are really pushing me to do it. They call me a *pansy* and a *Momma's boy* if I don't. I really don't like the idea of smoking but my good friend Steve told me in front of some of my friends, 'Kevin, you're *an idiot* and a *chicken* wrapped up in one little body'" (in John W. Santrock, *Child Development* [New York: William C. Brown, 1987], p. 408; italics added).

An eighteen-year-old priest recounted:

"On one occasion, I was persuaded to join a group on a weekend excursion. I was told that the [plans] for the day included . . . sightseeing, a lunch, and a movie. I was promised that there would be no [inappropriate activities]. All . . . knew that I was a Latter-day Saint and . . . deeply committed to the moral standards of the Church.

"Upon reaching the city, we visited a place or two of historical significance and ate lunch. Then the inevitable hap-