

ing to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session which follows must be in their seats before 9:15 A.M.

Now brethren, because daylight saving time begins at 2:00 A.M. tomorrow, we encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening. We want everyone on time tomorrow.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic

rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our gratitude to the Aaronic Priesthood choir from the Orem Utah Region for the inspiring music this evening. What a cadre of missionaries they comprise.

Following President Hinckley's address, the choir will conclude by singing "Thy Holy Word." The benediction will be offered by Elder J Ballard Washburn of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Believe in the prophets

My beloved brethren, this has been an inspirational meeting. We have heard much which, if applied, will bless our lives. I seek the direction of the Holy Spirit as I add my testimony. I desire to speak in the spirit of testimony. In so doing, I intend to speak rather informally of some of my own experiences and observations concerning the leaders of this Church. I have chosen a text from the second book of Chronicles, the twentieth chapter.

I take you back to the time when Jehoshaphat, the son of Asa, was king of Judah and Jerusalem.

It was a season of terrible anxiety. The Ammonites and the Moabites had declared war on the people of Judah. Those of Judah were vastly outnumbered, and their cause appeared hopeless.

Jehoshaphat gathered his people together to plead with the Lord for help. He cried out in prayer:

"O our God, . . . we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee" (2 Chronicles 20:12).

Then Jahaziel, the Levite prophet, said to Jehoshaphat:

"Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of

this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. . . .

"Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you . . . : fear not, nor be dismayed" (20:15, 17).

Then the king, relying upon the words of the prophet, said to the people, "Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; *Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper*" (20:20; italics added).

These are the words of my text. I repeat them: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper."

The Prophet Joseph Smith

We sing a hymn in this Church that is peculiar to us: "We thank thee, O God, for a prophet to guide us in these latter days" (*Hymns*, no. 19).

I have not spoken face to face with all of the prophets of this dispensation. I was not acquainted with the Prophet Joseph Smith, nor did I ever hear him speak. My grandfather, who as a young man lived in Nauvoo, did hear him and testified of his divine calling as the great prophet of this dispensation. But I feel I have come to know the Prophet Joseph Smith.

I have read and believed his testimony of his great first vision in which he conversed with the Father and the Son. I have pondered the wonder of that as I have stood in the grove where he prayed, and in that environment, by the power of the Spirit, I have received a witness that it happened as he said it happened.

I have read the Book of Mormon, which he translated by the gift and power of God. By the power of the Holy Ghost I have received a testimony and a witness of the divine origin of this sacred record. Joseph Smith did not write it of his own capacity.

I have seen with my own eyes the power of the priesthood which came to him under the hands of those who held it anciently. I have studied his life and measured his words. I have pondered the circumstances of his death, and I have come to know him—at least in some degree, at least enough that I can stand before you and testify that he was a prophet called and ordained to stand as God's instrument in this great work of restoration.

Other prophets of this dispensation

I never saw Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, or Lorenzo Snow. But I know they were men of God because I have studied their lives and read their words and received in my heart a witness of their calling as prophets of God.

I remember as a small boy seeing President Joseph F. Smith. I do not recall the details, but I have in my mind a picture of him as a man with a flowing beard whose voice was not strong. I have since read much of what he taught. And I know that he spoke as a prophet of the living God.

I have known in a personal way Presidents Heber J. Grant, George Albert Smith, David O. McKay, Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, Spencer W. Kimball, and Ezra Taft

Benson. I have done work for each. I have served under each. I have known them, I have heard them pray, and I can testify that each has been an unusual and remarkable man, that each has been called of God after a long period of experience and tempering, of training and discipline to stand as an instrument of the Almighty in speaking to the people for their blessing and direction.

President Heber J. Grant

I heard President Grant on several occasions before I met him. As teenage boys, my brother and I came to this Tabernacle at conference when there was room for anybody who wished to come. As boys are wont to do, we sat in the balcony at the very far end of the building. To me it was always impressive when this tall man stood to speak. Some kind of electricity passed through my boyish frame. His voice rang out in testimony of the Book of Mormon. When he said it was true, I knew it was true. He spoke with great power on the Word of Wisdom and, without hesitation, promised blessings to the people if they would observe it. I have often thought of the human misery, the pain that has resulted from the smoking of cigarettes, the poverty that has resulted from the drinking of liquor which might have been avoided had his prophetic counsel been followed.

He spoke on the law of tithing. I can still hear his great testimony of this principle. He spoke of the fast offering and said, as I remember him from my boyhood days, that if all the world would observe this simple principle, which came as a revelation from God, the needs of the poor over the earth would be met without taxing the people for welfare purposes.

He warned against the enslavement of personal debt. The world at that time was on a reckless pursuit of

riches. Then came Black Thursday of November 1929. I was nineteen years of age, a student at the university. I saw the economy crumble. I saw men whom I knew lose everything as their creditors moved against them. I saw much of the trauma and the stress of the times. I thought then, and I have thought since, how so many people might have been saved pain and misery, suffering, embarrassment, and trouble had they listened to the counsel of a prophet concerning personal debt.

President George Albert Smith

George Albert Smith succeeded Heber J. Grant as President and prophet. The terrible Second World War came to a close during his presidency. Our people, as well as others in Europe, were starving in the aftermath of that war. President Smith went to see the president of the United States, Harry Truman. He asked for transportation to get foodstuffs and clothing to those in need. President Truman asked President Smith where he would get these resources. President Smith replied that the Church operated production projects under a welfare program and that women of the Relief Society had saved wheat. The shelves of our storehouses were well stocked, and our granaries were filled. This had come of the prophetic foresight of Church leaders.

The government promised transportation, and Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve was sent to Europe to look after the distribution of the commodities which were shipped to Germany.

I was among those who worked nights at Welfare Square here in Salt Lake City loading commodities onto rail cars which moved the food to the port from which it was shipped across the sea. During the time of the Swiss Temple dedication, when many of the Saints of Germany came to the temple,

I heard some of them, with tears running down their cheeks, speak with appreciation for that food which had saved their lives.

President Smith used to talk of a line which we must not cross. One side was the Lord's, the other the adversary's. President Smith would say to us, "Stay on the Lord's side of the line." He frequently reminded us: "We are all our Father's children. We must love people into doing what's right." He was the epitome of love.

President David O. McKay

David O. McKay succeeded George Albert Smith. He was a robust and handsome man, commanding in his appearance, yet withal possessed of a smile that was beautiful and reassuring. He looked like a prophet, and he spoke as a prophet.

I recall the time when a world-renowned journalist came to interview him. This was a man who had met the great of the earth. He was tough and unsparing in his questioning and probing. When he came out of the President's office, he said to President McKay's secretary, "Today I have seen and talked with a prophet."

Great were his teachings; persuasive were his pleas for personal righteousness and the strengthening of our families. His great statement on the home has become as a motto with us: No success in life can compensate for failure in the home. Those who followed his counsel have been blessed. Those who scorned it have paid a tragic price.

President Joseph Fielding Smith

Joseph Fielding Smith next became President of the Church and the prophet of the Lord. Some thought he spoke harshly in the tone of a prophet of the Old Testament. He did speak

straightforwardly and without equivocation. Such is the mission of a prophet. But it was my experience that he was a man of great kindness who grieved over the unwillingness of so many to follow the commandments of the Lord.

He used three great words that I can never forget: "true and faithful." In his public addresses, in his private conversation, in his prayers to the Lord he pleaded that we might be true and faithful. Those who followed his counsel have tasted the sweet fruit of obedience. Those who have scoffed have known something of the bitterness that comes of a denial of truth.

President Harold B. Lee

Harold B. Lee came next. This was a man I loved. During the short tenure of his presidency, I traveled in Europe with him on two different occasions. Those were wonderful days when we talked together. I was his junior companion on those journeys, and he spoke out of his great heart about many things. He warned against the neglect of families. He told us that the greatest work any of us would ever do would be within the walls of our own homes. He told us to survey large fields and cultivate small ones. In so saying, he wanted us to get the great, broad picture of this work and then with faithfulness take care of our own individual responsibility in it.

He had come out of humble circumstances and carried in his heart a great sensitivity for the poor. He was the first managing director of the welfare program as it was established in 1936, and he taught its principles across the Church. He extended to me a call to serve as a stake president and set me apart in that office. I still remember some of the things he said in that blessing. Said he: "Be sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit. Be slow to censure and quick to encourage."

I commend that counsel to each of you. It came from a living prophet of God.

President Spencer W. Kimball

Great was my love also for his successor, President Spencer W. Kimball. This kindly man, short of stature, was so diligent, so energetic, so determined to overcome any handicap that even the quality of his injured voice actually became an asset. When he stood to speak, we all listened. Who can ever forget his great, moving statement:

"So much depends upon our willingness to make up our minds, collectively and individually, that present levels of performance are not acceptable [unto us] or to the Lord. In saying that, I am not calling for flashy, temporary differences in our performance levels, but a quiet resolve . . . to do a better job, to lengthen our stride" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], p. 174).

That call to lengthen our stride went across the entire Church. Many took it to heart and worked with greater enthusiasm and dedication. As they did so, they were blessed in their lives. How great is my debt, and is yours also, to this kindly man of gentle ways and prophetic leadership.

President Ezra Taft Benson

President Ezra Taft Benson was ordained and set apart to his high and holy calling immediately following the death of President Kimball. Could anyone doubt his qualifications for this responsibility? Over the years in public and Church affairs, he had moved with ease among the great of the earth. Since the days of his childhood, he has carried in his heart a deep and unmovable conviction concerning the divinity of this work. He has exercised the authority of the apostleship in his minis-

try among the nations. He has spoken prophetically and wonderfully on many things, but his most oft-repeated message to the people of the Church has been, "Read the Book of Mormon."

Why? Because he knows that the reading of this sacred testament will bring us closer to God and that there is no greater need among us than this.

Could there be a call from a prophet more timely than this call? One need only look at the filth and rot that are sweeping over the world in the form of pornographic literature, pornographic movies, pornographic videocassettes, pornographic television to see the need for a great and powerful and moving counterforce for righteousness.

Importance of following the prophets

I go back to the words of Jehoshaphat: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper" (2 Chronicles 20:20).

There are many little things that test our willingness to accept the word of the prophets. Jesus said, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37).

So it has been through the history of mankind, and so it is today. In our own communities, even here in Utah, we have experienced some of this. President Grant carried to his grave a deep sense of sorrow that, contrary to his counsel, the people of Utah cast the final vote, in 1934, that repealed the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

I am grateful to say that we had a different experience some years ago when we joined with other citizens in a campaign to control the distribution of liquor. There is no question in my mind that great benefits have come as a result of the overwhelming response

to direction from our prophet. There was a similar result when it was proposed that an MX Missile site be located here. Under the leadership of President Kimball, we took a position on this matter. I believe that not only were we of this part of the country blessed because of that position, but also the entire nation, and perhaps the world.

Now again, as always, we are faced with public moral issues, this time concerning lotteries, pari-mutuel betting, and other forms of gambling. The Presidents of the Church have spoken clearly and unequivocally on these matters.

These are little things, but they are important things. They bring to mind the great contest between the prophet Elijah and the priests of Baal. Said Elijah on that occasion: "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21).

Be true and faithful

Now in conclusion, may I repeat that I have worked with seven Presidents of this Church. I have recognized that all have been human. But I have never been concerned over this. They may have had some weaknesses. But this has never troubled me. I know that the God of heaven has used mortal men throughout history to accomplish His divine purposes. They were the very best available to Him, and they were wonderful.

These men whom I have known and with whom I have worked have been totally unselfish in their zeal to build the kingdom of God and bring happiness into the lives of the people. They have been unsparing in giving of themselves to the great work for which each had responsibility in his particular season.

I speak to the priesthood of this Church, wherever you may be gathered

across the world, in gratitude for a prophet to guide us in these latter days. I plead for loyalty to him whom the Lord has called and anointed. I plead for steadfastness in upholding him and giving attention to his teachings. I have said on another occasion at this pulpit that if we have a prophet, we have everything. If we do not have a prophet, we have nothing. We do have a prophet. We have had prophets since the founding of this Church. We shall never be without a prophet if we live worthy of a prophet.

The Lord is watching over this work. This is His kingdom. We are not as sheep without a shepherd. We are not as an army without a leader.

I go back to those three words so frequently spoken by President Joseph

Fielding Smith: "true and faithful." God help us to be true and faithful, to hear with listening ears that counsel which has come from Him who is our Father and our God, and from Him who is our Savior and our Redeemer as they have spoken to us through those whom we sustain as prophets. I bear witness and testimony of these things and, my brethren, leave my blessing and love with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Thy Holy Word." Elder J Ballard Washburn offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 162nd Annual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 5, 1992. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger conducting and Richard Elliott at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "For the Strength of the Hills" without announcement.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this beautiful spring Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 162nd annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We are honored this morning with the presence of President Ezra Taft

Benson, who presides at this conference.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Dallin H. Oaks, Benjamin B. Banks, and Rulon G. Craven are seated on the stand.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations who are broadcasting this conference.

We note that the conference is being relayed for the first time to satellite downlink locations in Huddersfield, England; Versailles, France; and Frankfurt, Germany.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled from far and near to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brothers Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, with Brother