

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

I pray for the Spirit of the Lord while I speak to you on this sacred occasion.

President Benson's mighty influence

President Ezra Taft Benson is the only one who exercises all the keys of the kingdom. In addition, we sustain fourteen others as prophets, seers, and revelators. President Benson's mighty influence is felt in many ways. His timely and inspired counsel to read the precious Book of Mormon brought an added appreciation of this sacred scripture to all who followed his direction.

A few weeks ago I witnessed President Benson's radiating power in a sacred room in the Salt Lake Temple when a granddaughter of his was married. As he came into the room, I observed his infirmities of age because he is ninety-four years old. All stood to honor him as the prophet and President of the Church. He brought with him a great spirit of warmth, love, and peace.

In this day of confusion and anxiety about the well-being of our nation and the entire world, we should pay attention to the exemplary and noble life of President Benson and to his writings and sermons as President of the Church.

The gospel is the only way to find peace

I would like today to emphasize the divinity of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We live in a day when Lucifer's influence is greater than we ever have known in our lifetimes. In terms of the sin, evil, and wickedness upon the earth, we could liken our time to the days of Noah before the flood. No one is immune to affliction and difficulty, whether it be economical, emotional, or spiritual. Immorality, violence, and divorce, with their accompanying sorrows, plague society worldwide.

The only way to find peace, happiness, and security and to overcome the

evils of the world and temptations of this generation is in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The head of the Church

Jesus is the head of his church, the Creator of the universe, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind, and the Judge of the souls of men. Who he is and what he does affected each of us before we were born and will affect us each day of our mortal lives and throughout the eternities. Much of what he is and does is beyond finite human ability to comprehend, but the Holy Ghost has borne witness to my soul of their reality.

I am grateful to know that our Lord and Savior stands at the head of this church and directs it through his servants. This is the Lord's church; it is not a church of men. The Brethren of its presiding councils are called of God; their only motive is to serve according to his will in humility "with all [their] heart, might, mind and strength" (D&C 4:2).

The Church bears the Lord's name because it is his church. He commanded the Nephites to "call the church in my name. . . . For if a church be called . . . in the name of a man then it be the church of a man; but if it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel" (3 Nephi 27:7-8).

To the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord revealed that in the last days His restored church should be called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (see D&C 115:4).

The Creator of the universe

The Lord told Moses when they spoke together face to face on a high mountain:

"Worlds without number have I created; . . . by the Son I created them. . . .

"But only an account of this earth . . . give I unto you. . . . There are many worlds . . . that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man; but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them" (Moses 1:33, 35).

This brief passage of scripture gives a slight glimpse of the immensity and grandeur of our Lord as Creator. A modern astronomer gives further insight: "The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be. . . . The size and age of the Cosmos are beyond ordinary human understanding. . . . The dimensions of the Cosmos are so large that . . . familiar units of distance . . . make little sense. Instead, we measure distance with the speed of light. In one second a beam of light travels 186,000 miles. . . . In a year, it crosses . . . about six trillion miles. . . . That unit of length, the distance light goes in a year, is called a light-year. It measures not time but distances—enormous distances. . . .

" . . . The Cosmos is mostly empty. . . . Worlds are precious. . . .

"A galaxy is composed of gas and dust and stars—billions upon billions of stars. Every star may be a sun to someone. . . . There are some hundred billion . . . galaxies, each with, on the average, a hundred billion stars. . . . We are hard pressed to find even the cluster in which our Milky Way Galaxy is embedded, much less the Sun or the Earth. . . .

" . . . The Milky Way contains some 400 billion stars of all sorts moving with a complex and orderly grace. Of all the stars, the inhabitants of Earth know close-up, so far, but one."¹

The Savior's atoning sacrifice

In a conversation between God and Moses, God said, "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). God said also, "Mine Only Begotten is and shall be the Savior" (Moses 1:6).

The immortality and eternal life of man are brought to pass by the atonement of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. It is "the most transcendent act that ever has occurred or ever will occur among the children of the Father."² It is an act of love for which we should be more grateful than for any other blessing or gift of God. The Atonement provides immortality to every person; immortality is infinite and universal. It provides the opportunity for eternal life, the kind of life that God lives, to those who have faith in Christ, repent of their sins, and obey the laws of the gospel. In a miraculous way, the Atonement saves and redeems us from the effects of the fall of Adam, both temporal death at the end of mortality and spiritual death, the separation from our Father.

Only Jesus, because he is the Only Begotten Son, could make the infinite and eternal atonement so we can be at one with our Heavenly Father. When Jesus was born into mortality, his parents were God the Eternal Father (see 1 Nephi 11:21) and Mary, whom Nephi saw in a heavenly vision as "a virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins" (v. 15). He is God's Only Begotten Son, the only one who ever has or ever will be born on earth of such parentage. Because of his mortal nature, inherited from his mother, he had "the power of mortality, which is the power to die, . . . to separate body and spirit."³ Because of his divine nature, inherited from his Father, he had "the power of immortality, which is the power to live forever; or, having chosen to die, . . . to rise again in immortality."⁴ The Savior said:

"I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:17–18).

"It was because of . . . this intermixture of the divine and the mortal in one person, that our Lord was able to

work out the infinite and eternal atonement. . . . He had power to live or to die, as he chose, and having laid down his life, he had power to take it again, and then, in a way incomprehensible to us, to pass on the effects of that resurrection to all men so that all shall rise from the tomb.”⁵

Our judge at the Second Coming

At the time of the Second Coming, Jesus will judge the souls of all mankind in an inevitable judgment. In the gospel of John we read:

“The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: . . .

“ . . . The Father hath . . . given to the Son . . . authority to execute judgment. . . .

“ . . . For the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

“And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:22, 26–29).

The prophet Mormon wrote: “Ye must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, yea, every soul who belongs to the whole human family of Adam; and ye must stand to be judged of your works, whether they be good or evil” (Mormon 3:20).

We read in Matthew:

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

“And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

“And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: . . .

“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:31–34, 41).

Show gratitude by coming to know Jesus

Considering all that Jesus is and all he does for us, what should we be doing to show our appreciation? We should go far beyond knowing *about* Jesus and *about* his attributes and mission. We should come to “know . . . the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). “It is one thing to know about God and another to know him. We know about him when we learn that he is a personal being in whose image man is created; when we learn that the Son is in the express image of his Father’s person; when we learn that both the Father and the Son possess certain specified attributes and powers. But we know them, in the sense of gaining eternal life, when we enjoy and experience the same things they do. To know God is to think what he thinks, to feel what he feels, to have the power he possesses, to comprehend the truths he understands, and to do what he does. Those who know God become like him, and have his kind of life, which is eternal life.”⁶

In other words, to possess a knowledge of Christ, we must become as he is. We become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). He instructed his Nephite disciples: “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27).

Love one another

One underlying principle runs throughout the Savior’s life, mission, and teachings: We are to love one another. He said to his disciples:

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34–35).

He said also, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

Imagine for a moment the result if everyone were to love one another as Jesus loves his disciples. We would have no bickering, quarreling, strife, or contention in our homes. We would not offend or insult one another either verbally or in any other way. We would not have unnecessary litigation over small matters. War would be impossible, especially war waged in the name of religion.

Testimonies of Jesus Christ

We have numerous testimonies of the reality and divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. From the time of Adam, the ancient prophets, including the brother of Jared, knew the Savior in his spirit form as Jehovah. During his life on earth, his disciples in Palestine walked and talked with him. They were with him as he taught, when he performed miracles, when he was crucified, and after his resurrection. Peter wrote:

“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16).

When the resurrected Lord visited and taught the Nephites, “he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying, “Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world” (3 Nephi 11:9–10).

In our day, the Father and the Son visited the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove. Of this visit Joseph wrote: “I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

When the Savior accepted the Kirtland Temple as his house, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery “saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit. . . . His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying: I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father” (D&C 110:2–4).

In a heavenly vision, the Prophet and Sidney Rigdon saw and conversed with Jesus Christ and gave this account:

“After the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

“For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father” (D&C 76:22–23).

Bear testimony to strengthen others

I was fortunate as a young boy attending ward testimony meetings to hear the fervent testimonies of older ward members. Now I counsel you who are more mature spiritually to bear your witness of the truth of the gospel; of the reality of the Savior and his love for each of us; and of the divine calling of his prophets, seers, and revelators. Your witness will develop testimonies in younger people as the members of my ward did in me. Parents should bear testimony frequently to strengthen conviction in the hearts of their children.

I am humbly grateful to be one of the “special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world” (D&C 107:23). I know that he lives. He is with us, and we can feel his influence in our lives if we are obedient, conform to his teachings, and are prayerful. He wants each of us and the Church to succeed and wants members of the Church to carry

his teachings to the world. The Church is the structure through which he can give to the world his message of hope, the hope of salvation, the right to live with our Heavenly Father and his Beloved Son forever. Our Heavenly Father lives and loves each of his children. I testify that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God, as are each of his successors through President Ezra Taft Benson, our present prophet. I bear this witness in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* [New York: Random House, 1980], pp. 4-5, 7, 10.
2. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982], p. 15.
3. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978], p. 471.

4. *The Promised Messiah*, p. 471.
5. *The Promised Messiah*, p. 471.
6. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-73], 1:762.

The chorus sang "Sweet Is the Work."

President Hinckley

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us, followed by the choir singing "Sweet Is the Work."

Bishop Robert D. Hales, Presiding Bishop of the Church, will now address us, and he will be followed by Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Bishop Robert D. Hales

My message today is one of love. I love my dear companion, Mary, my two sons, and their families. May I express appreciation for all the joy they have brought into my life.

As I think about these relationships with my own family, I cannot help but return to the example I received from my own parents. Our children will remember us by our example. From my earliest childhood, I remember experiences which taught me about the priesthood which I hold and to respect and love the relationship my father and mother had with one another.

Learning respect for the priesthood

My father taught me respect for the priesthood. While serving in the Aaronic Priesthood, we passed the sacrament using stainless steel sacra-

ment trays which, as a result of spilled water, were often dulled with hard water spots. As a holder of the Aaronic Priesthood, I was responsible for helping prepare the sacrament. Father asked me to bring home the trays, and together we cleaned them with steel wool until every tray sparkled. When I passed the sacrament, I knew we had participated in making the sacrament ordinance a little more sacred.

On vacations, Father would take us to historical sites that were prominent in Church history to build our knowledge and testimonies.

On one occasion, when I was a twelve-year-old deacon, Father asked if I would like to go to the baseball hall of fame in Cooperstown, New York, and to the Hill Cumorah Pageant near Palmyra, New York. This is where Joseph Smith was led to the golden plates which were