

He is our prophet today. He was prepared and foreordained before the foundation of the world. For over a half century he has been taught and tutored by apostles and prophets with whom he has served. He is wise. He is caring. He speaks for the Lord. His is the voice to which we should now respond. Our spiritual safety lies in turning to the clear voice of our living prophet. If we listen to his voice and obey his counsel, we will be able to live as Christ would have us live and endure to the end so that one day we, along with our families, will return back into the presence of our Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

I humbly add my testimony to the testimonies of all who have sustained

the prophet this day in this solemn assembly, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Hark, All Ye Nations!"

President Hinckley

We have just listened to Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Hark, All Ye Nations!"

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve will be our concluding speaker.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Living water to quench spiritual thirst

Early in his mortal ministry, the Savior and his disciples passed through Samaria while traveling from Judea to Galilee. Weary, hungry, and thirsty from their journey, they stopped at Jacob's well in the city of Sychar. While the disciples went in search of food, the Savior remained at the well. He requested a drink from a Samaritan woman who had come to draw water. Because the Jews and Samaritans were divided by rancor and did not often speak to one another, the woman responded to the Savior's request with a question: "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?"¹

In the New Testament the Savior used this simple encounter at the well to teach powerful, eternal truths. Though weary and thirsty, the Master Teacher took this opportunity to testify of his divine role as the Redeemer of the world and to proclaim authoritatively his true

identity as the long-promised Messiah. He patiently yet thoughtfully answered the woman, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."²

Intrigued but skeptical, and seeing that Jesus had no container with which to draw water, the woman queried further, "From whence then hast thou that living water?"³ In a powerful promise, Jesus then declared himself to be the source of living water, the wellspring of life everlasting. He said:

"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."⁴

Missing entirely the spiritual meaning in the Lord's message, the woman, thinking only of satisfying her physical

thirst and of her convenience, demanded, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."⁵

Live the gospel to be happy

In commenting on the conversation between the Savior and the woman, Bishop Robert L. Simpson taught:

"Throughout history men have always been looking for the easy way. [Some] have devoted their lives to finding the 'fountain of youth,' a miracle water which would bring everlasting life. Today [many] are still seeking . . . some magic 'fountain' that [will] bring forth success, fulfillment, and happiness. But most of this searching is in vain. . . . It is only this 'living water,' the gospel of Jesus Christ, that can and will bring a happy, a successful, and an everlasting life to the children of men."⁶

The Savior's promise to that woman extends to all of our Heavenly Father's children. By living the gospel of Jesus Christ we develop within ourselves a living spring that will quench eternally our thirst for happiness, peace, and everlasting life. The Lord explains clearly in the Doctrine and Covenants that only faithful obedience can tap the well of living water that refreshes and enlivens our souls: "But unto him that *keepeth my commandments* I will give the mysteries of my kingdom, and the same shall be in him a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life."⁷

Many Samaritans believe

When the woman said she knew the Messiah would come, Jesus said, "I that speak unto thee am he."⁸ He demonstrated his power of prophetic discernment by telling the woman personal details about her life that only one with divine insight could have known. Astonished, the Samaritan woman left her water pot and hurried off to tell others of her interview with the Lord, saying,

"Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"⁹ While she gathered those of her city who would listen, Jesus taught his now-retained disciples that he already had "meat to eat that ye know not of."¹⁰ To his puzzled disciples who were carrying the food they had acquired, he explained, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."¹¹

When the crowd of curious Samaritans arrived to see and hear the man who had proclaimed himself to be the Messiah, "they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days."¹² The scriptures tell us that many believed the Savior's teachings. As they listened, their initial curiosity matured into testimony. They declared, "We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."¹³

Latter days a time of spiritual thirst

These latter days are a time of great spiritual thirst. Many in the world are searching, often intensely, for a source of refreshment that will quench their yearning for meaning and direction in their lives. They crave a cool, satisfying drink of insight and knowledge that will soothe their parched souls. Their spirits cry out for life-sustaining experiences of peace and calm to nourish and enliven their withering hearts.

Indeed "there are many yet on the earth among all sects, parties, and denominations, who are blinded by the subtle craftiness of men, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, and who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it."¹⁴ Let us work with all our heart, might, mind, and strength to show our thirsty brothers and sisters where they may find the living water of the gospel, that they may come to drink of the water that springs "up unto everlasting life."

Jesus is the only source of living water

The Lord provides the living water that can quench the burning thirst of those whose lives are parched by a drought of truth. He expects us to supply to them the fulness of the gospel by giving them the scriptures and the words of the prophets and to bear personal testimony as to the truth of the restored gospel to alleviate their thirst. When they drink from the cup of gospel knowledge, their thirst is satisfied as they come to understand our Heavenly Father's great plan of happiness.

As at Jacob's well, so today the Lord Jesus Christ is the only source of living water. It will quench the thirst of those suffering from the drought of divine truth that so afflicts the world. The words of the Lord to ancient Israel spoken by the prophet Jeremiah describe the condition of many of God's children in our own day: "My people . . . have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out . . . broken cisterns, that can hold no water."¹⁵ Too many of our Heavenly Father's children spend their precious lives carving out broken cisterns of worldly gain that cannot hold the living water that satisfies fully their natural thirst for everlasting truth.

On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the Savior, now returned to Jerusalem, extended this timeless, universal invitation: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."¹⁶

Elder Bruce R. McConkie defined living water as "the words of eternal life, the message of salvation, the truths about God and his kingdom; it is the doctrines of the gospel." He went on to explain, "Where there are prophets of God, there will be found rivers of living water, wells filled with eternal truths, springs bubbling forth their life-giving draughts that save from spiritual death."¹⁷

Prophets refresh us with living water

The Lord has declared that "whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same."¹⁸ We are blessed to live in a day when prophets and apostles live on the earth. Through them we are refreshed continually by an abundant stream of eternal truth that, if obeyed, brings the living water of the Lord into our lives. Echoing those Samaritans who listened to the Savior at Jacob's well, we too can say with faith and with firm conviction, "We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."¹⁹

We miss hearing the voice of President Howard W. Hunter. Surely it was the love, hope, and compassion of Jesus Christ that we heard in President Hunter's simple eloquence. He raised us to new heights of understanding and urged us to renew our commitment to keep sacred covenants. He reminded us that "Christ's supreme sacrifice can find full fruition in our lives only as we accept the invitation to follow him."²⁰ When President Hunter asked us to "treat each other with more kindness, more courtesy, more humility and patience and forgiveness,"²¹ his personal example of these Christlike virtues taught us with a persuasive power that transcended even his unforgettable spoken words. He encouraged us to drink more often and more deeply of the living water to bring spiritual enrichment into our lives.

Drink living water at the temple

President Howard W. Hunter said: "It would be the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church be temple worthy. I would hope that every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend, even if proximity to a temple does not allow immediate or frequent use of it." He wanted every one of us to

be strengthened by the "sanctity and safety which is provided within [the] hallowed and consecrated walls" of the house of the Lord.²² What better way to become more closely acquainted with the Savior and to strengthen our commitment to be more like him than to visit frequently his holy house and drink deeply of the living waters that are there. President Hunter wanted us to qualify ourselves through righteous living for the blessings of beauty, revelation, and peace that can be enjoyed in our temples; hence, his oft-repeated invitation "to establish the temple . . . as the great symbol of [our] membership" in the Lord's church.²³

President Hinckley, the Lord's anointed

Today we have sustained President Hunter's successor. I rejoice with you in the opportunity we have had in this solemn assembly to sustain President Gordon B. Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and as spokesman for our Lord Jesus Christ here on the earth. He is the Lord's anointed. He holds all priesthood keys and is authorized to exercise them in leading and directing the kingdom of God. President Hinckley is a faithful servant of the Lord, whose heart and voice we know well. We have come to love him through his thirty-seven-year ministry as a General Authority of the Church. Nearly thirty-four years ago he was ordained an Apostle, a special witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the longest-serving General Authority now living. When President Hinckley was called to the Twelve, the Church had 1,900,000 members and 336 stakes compared with 9,000,000 members and more than 2,000 stakes today.

Born of a noble father and a saintly mother, President Hinckley learned as a young boy the truths of the restored gospel from his faithful parents. He

came to respect deeply and value highly his pioneer heritage. He served valiantly as a young missionary in England. Throughout his adult life he has worked tirelessly to build the kingdom. He has served under eight Presidents of the Church, including fourteen years as a counselor to the last three: Presidents Spencer W. Kimball, Ezra Taft Benson, and Howard W. Hunter.

President Hinckley's preparation for his current service has been lifelong. As President Boyd K. Packer reminded us recently, "No man comes to be the President of this church except he has been apprenticed for a lifetime."²⁴ From the scriptures we learn that those who serve as prophets were "prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God."²⁵

I bear my witness that President Hinckley has been foreordained, raised up, prepared, and called of God "to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life."²⁶ I have been well acquainted with him since my early youth and have observed firsthand that the fabric of his noble character contains not a single shoddy thread. From the living water of the Lord and his restored gospel, President Hinckley has drunk deeply throughout his entire lifetime. Because of his righteous obedience, streams of living water have flowed and will continue to flow from him²⁷ to quench the thirst of a spiritually parched world.

I am grateful today to sustain President Thomas S. Monson and President James E. Faust as counselors in the First Presidency. They too have been tried and tested in the service of God and all humankind over many years. They are valiant and faithful. These three presiding high priests of the First Presidency merit our loyalty and devotion. We can sustain and follow them with absolute trust and confidence.

Bring living water to all who thirst

As one who also stands as a special witness, I join my testimony with those believing Samaritans of long ago. Brothers and sisters, to you and to all the world I testify in all soberness that this same Jesus of Nazareth who spoke with the woman at Jacob's well "is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."²⁸ He lives today. He is our Redeemer and our Advocate with the Father. He stands at the head of this church that bears his name. The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stand as his duly authorized and ordained servants, charged with the sacred and solemn responsibility to guide his church in these latter days. Our responsibility "is to do the will of him that sent [us]"²⁹ and bring that living water to all who thirst for it. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John 4:9.
2. John 4:10.
3. John 4:11.
4. John 4:13-14.
5. John 4:15.
6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1968, p. 96.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 63:23; italics added.
8. John 4:26.
9. John 4:29.
10. John 4:32.
11. John 4:34.
12. John 4:40.
13. John 4:42.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 123:12.
15. Jeremiah 2:13.
16. John 7:37.
17. *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-73), 1:151-52.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
19. John 4:42.
20. "He Invites Us to Follow Him," *Ensign*, Sept. 1994, p. 2.
21. *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 4.

22. *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 5.
23. *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 5.
24. "President Howard W. Hunter—He Endured to the End," *Ensign*, Apr. 1995, p. 30.
25. Alma 13:3.
26. 3 Nephi 5:13.
27. See John 7:38; Doctrine and Covenants 63:23.
28. John 4:42.
29. John 4:34.

President Hinckley

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has been our concluding speaker.

We are mindful of the effort many of you have made to be here this morning. Some of you were in line long before sunrise. This Tabernacle, which once seemed so large, has become very small in terms of those who desire to attend. We need a much larger place of assembly, although we would never be able to build a place large enough to accommodate the full needs of this vital, growing church.

Thank you, my beloved brethren and sisters, for your vote of confidence this morning. We are overwhelmed by the meaning of this. I'll speak further of that in other sessions.

We appreciate the kindness of owners of television and radio stations and cable systems and all who have made it possible for us to reach out across the world.

This wonderful Mormon Youth Chorus will now sing "More Holiness Give Me." The benediction will then be offered by Elder V. Dallas Merrell of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The chorus sang "More Holiness Give Me."

Elder V. Dallas Merrell offered the benediction.
