

Ground was broken and construction began on 30 new temples during 1999; 17 additional temples were announced and are awaiting construction.

Prominent members who have passed away since last April

Elder Carlos E. Asay, an emeritus General Authority; Sister Virginia Pickett

Backman, wife of Elder Robert L. Backman, an emeritus General Authority

President Faust

Our first speaker in this session will be Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder L. Tom Perry

To Brother Ted E. Davis, Donald D. Salmon, Frank M. McCord: as a member of the Church I'd just like to personally thank you for the untold hours, days, and years you have spent in assuring me that everything in the Church, accounting-wise, is in proper order. It's deeply appreciated, I'm sure, by nearly 11 million other members of the Church. Thank you so much.

Use of technology to spread the gospel

Over the last couple of years, we have watched with great anticipation the construction of this beautiful Conference Center. Now we find ourselves enjoying this historic general conference with many more thousands present to hear the words of the prophets. This is surely the beginning of a new era in Church history—an era of broader, more profound reach and influence, an era of greater growth and impact.

Before the final meeting of the First Presidency and the Twelve last year, President Hinckley, sensing the forthcoming changes about to occur, proposed that we come to the temple fasting and conclude our year, the century, and a millennium with a fast and testimony meeting. So not to detract from the spirit of testimony, he requested that we dispense with any business items at this special meeting and save them for the new year.

The meeting was a spiritual feast, filled with the witness and testimony of our Lord and Savior. After partaking of the sacrament, each member of the Twelve stood and bore his witness to the mission of Jesus the Christ, the Savior of the world. The concluding three testimonies were given by members of the First Presidency, the final witness being given by President Hinckley. It was a sobering yet joyous occasion as we strengthened each other with strong testimonies.

President Hinckley added to his powerful, emotional witness a list of concerns for the future. One of his concerns particularly stuck in my mind. His worry was that with the great growth of the Church throughout the world, it would become increasingly difficult for the Apostles to reach all the members of the Church and personally admonish them to live the gospel. Thus, the future would bring greater reliance on technology to carry the gospel message to the worldwide Church.

As we review the sacred history contained in the holy scriptures, we find similar events when a prophet of God sees significant changes in the horizons ahead. It is interesting that when such critical events occur, great and inspired attention and detail are given both to the prophetic message *and* the way it is delivered—that

is, the technology that's used to carry the gospel message.

King Benjamin instructs his sons

I am reminded of the great sermon King Benjamin delivered to his people, which is found in the first chapters of the book of Mosiah. This righteous king had served his people long and faithfully. It was time to turn the leadership over to his son. But before doing so, he wanted to leave his witness and testimony of his Lord and Savior to his people. He wanted first to instruct his sons "that . . . they might become men of understanding; and that they might know concerning the prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers, which were delivered them by the hand of the Lord.

" . . . He also taught them concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, saying: My sons, I would that ye should remember that were it not for these plates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God" (Mosiah 1:2-3).

Keeping the doctrine pure was foremost in King Benjamin's mind, so he wanted all of his people to receive his witness and his word. He instructed that Mosiah, his son and successor, be brought before him, and to him he gave specific instructions concerning the gathering of his people for this, his final conference. He said:

"My son, I would that ye should make a proclamation throughout all this land among all this people, or the people of Zarahemla, and the people of Mosiah who dwell in the land, that thereby they may be gathered together; for on the morrow I shall proclaim unto this my people out of mine own mouth that thou art a king and a ruler over this people, whom the Lord our God hath given us.

"And moreover, I shall give this people a name, that thereby they may be distinguished above all the people which the Lord God hath brought out of the land of Jerusalem; and this I do because they have been a diligent people in keeping the commandments of the Lord" (Mosiah 1:10-11).

King Benjamin teaches his people

Then Mosiah went forth and proclaimed to the people that they should gather themselves and go up to the temple, where they might hear the words of his father. And the people gathered together, and "they pitched their tents round about, every man according to his family, consisting of his wife, and his sons, and his daughters, and their sons, and their daughters, from the eldest down to the youngest, every family being separate one from another" (Mosiah 2:5). They pitched their tents with their doors toward the temple so that they might hear the words of King Benjamin as he instructed them in the doctrine of eternal life. Because of the numbers of people that were there gathered within and without the walls of the temple, the king had a tower erected so they could hear his words. But he realized that even with the tower not all would be able to hear, so he caused that his words should be written and sent forth among the families who were not within the sound of his voice, that all might receive his words. (See Mosiah 2:6-8.)

From this tower he told his people to open their ears and listen to his testimony of the Savior. After prophesying and bearing testimony, he counseled them about how to return to their Heavenly Father:

"And moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and

spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness. O remember, remember that these things are true; for the Lord God hath spoken it" (Mosiah 2:41).

Finally, to ensure that the people understood his words and kept their covenants with God to keep His commandments, King Benjamin "appointed priests to teach the people, that thereby they might hear and know the commandments of God, and to stir them up in remembrance of the oath which they had made" (Mosiah 6:3). In many ways, King Benjamin used all the technologies available to him in his day to gather his people, spread the good word of God, and reinforce the word.

President Grant's use of new technology

In another era we find another prophet using new media to have his message reach the hearts of the people. There was a special conference held at the time the Church reached its 100th birthday. We find this record from the 100th annual conference, held in the Tabernacle on Sunday, April 6, 1930:

"In accordance with instructions previously issued by the First Presidency of the Church, the following program was carried out in all the wards and branches of the Church, commencing at 10:00 A.M., Sunday, April 6th, except . . . where arrangements had been made for the people to assemble in their local chapels and listen, by means of radio equipment, to the services as they were broadcast from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. . . .

". . . The [Tabernacle] was crowded to capacity, every seat being taken, and the aisles and doorways and every other available space occupied" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1930, 2).

President Heber J. Grant, presiding at this broadcast session of the general conference, began:

"My heart is full of gratitude beyond my power to express as I look upon this wonderful audience of the priesthood of the living God, together with officers of our organizations, assembled here in conference in commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"I am about to read to you an address by the First Presidency of the Church, copies of which have been sent to all wards, stakes and missions in all countries where we have organizations of the Church. At this hour all over the world this message will be read to our people" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1930, 3).

Like King Benjamin, President Grant began by bearing his testimony of God the Father and of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then he went on to emphasize some of the great scientific knowledge, inventions, and industrial developments that have harnessed the forces of the universe and been adapted for the comfort and convenience of men. He stated:

"Undoubtedly the greatest miracle of the century is the accomplishment by which the human voice, with the personality of the speaker, may be indefinitely preserved and reproduced with every detail of originality. . . .

"Contemplating these accomplishments of the past century, to which but brief reference has been made, we are led to exclaim:

"Great and marvelous are thy ways, O Lord.

"From eternity to eternity Thou art the same!

"Thy purposes fail not, neither are there any who can stay Thy hand!" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1930, 5).

Use of modern technology today

Now, on this day, April 1, in the year 2000, we are gathered in this beautiful new Conference Center, which has been built so many more thousands can see the

prophet and hear his voice. But even with this building and the increased ability to travel among the Saints to meet them in so many other lands, smaller numbers will be able to enjoy that personal contact with the prophets and apostles because of the growth of the Church. Technology has blessed us with many innovations to spread the message of the gospel through satellite systems; our own network web site, television, and radio; as well as the written text in our magazines and newspaper. All of these add to our delivery systems, which greatly increase our ability to receive the messages that are delivered.

Internalize messages of the gospel

But the bricks and mortar and the continued expansion of technology will only bring the messages to us. One challenge remains the same from the time of King Benjamin to the time of President Grant to today—that is, the challenge of each individual and family, through personal and collective study, to internalize the messages of the gospel of our Lord and Savior. Salvation is not in facilities or technology, but in the word. Only in the power of the word will it impact our lives and help us to live closer to our Father in Heaven.

Remember the words of the Lord when He first instructed the Saints in His

newly restored Church on April 6, 1830. He declared:

“Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

“Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

“For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith” (D&C 21:1, 4–5).

It is wonderful to be in this beautiful new facility and to have new technology which carries conference sessions throughout the world. But it is the message we receive which, if we study and practice, will bring us the light of the gospel as further preparation in our great quest for eternal life.

This is my humble testimony to you, and I do it in the name of our Savior, even Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elders Glenn L. Pace and Jay E. Jensen of the Seventy.

Elder Glenn L. Pace

Life enriched by the temple

Several years ago I attended a BYU football game with some of our young children. We lost the game. I really hate it when that happens. We listened to the coaches' show on the ride back to our home in Bountiful. When it was over, my children had no alternative but to listen

to my own postgame show. Just as I had completed my final analysis of what went wrong in the game, my seven-year-old daughter asked, “Dad, when you see the temple, do you get a good feeling inside?” I wondered, “Where in the world did that come from?” As I was trying to figure out what that comment had to do with the football game, I glanced over at