

The Latter Day Saints' **Beacon**

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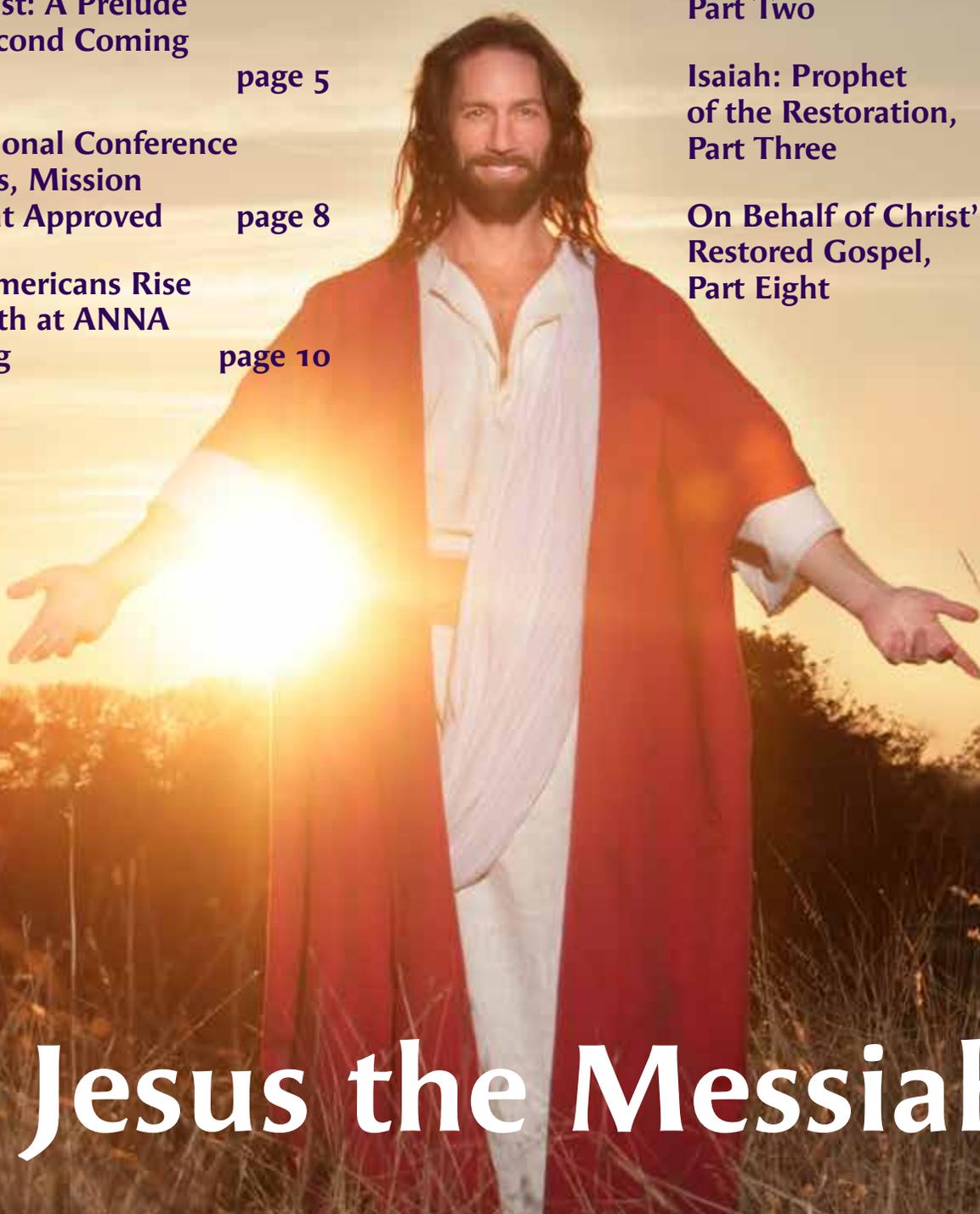
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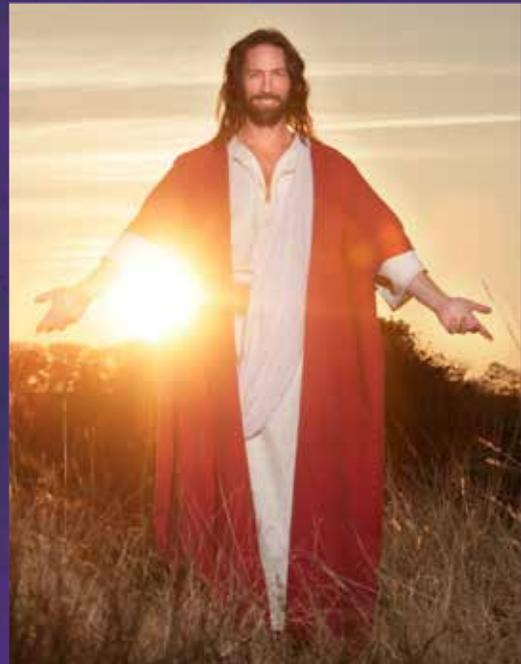
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Mission Statement:

This magazine is dedicated to proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and bearing witness to the everlasting promises of God. Our intention is to inspire the Saints to walk faithfully in the name of our Savior, bearing fruit worthy of the Kingdom of God.

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Editor's Letter**The Coming Messiah**

By Gary R. Whiting

Approximately 2000 years ago, God sent his word into the world to become flesh and blood and dwell among us (John 1:14). This was not a new word, but a word that had always existed. As the sent word of God, Jesus gained a title which reflects his position and authority as God's messenger—Messiah.

John wrote things essential to our understanding of God. He described the word as eternal, life giving and life saving. The word is eternal because it was with God from the beginning and coexists with him (John 1:1-2). The word is also noted to be with the Son and, in the Inspired Version, it is the gospel. John goes on to show that Jesus is the living word who was made flesh (took on human form) and dwelt among us. Jesus is the word or the gospel.

The word is life giving because by it all things were made. Jesus, as the word, is the means by which everything was made. John is not being carelessly redundant when he wrote, "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made which was made" (John 1:3). John wants us to know, through a positive and a negative statement, nothing came into being without Jesus Christ and therefore, Jesus is Lord over all things and people. The apostle also is emphasizing that nothing can come into being without the word of God. Paul confirmed these declarations by John in his letters, for example, Colossians 1:16-17. Jesus is the word of God and is the only life giving word or power in the universe.

In John 1:9, John declared that Jesus is the light that lights every person who comes into the world. Life is equated to light in verse 4. We live by the word/light/life of Jesus. This is why Jesus was able to say he was the essential bread of life. Moses de-

clared, "man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live (Deuteronomy 8:3).

The word is presented as life saving because the word is the gospel or the message of salvation. John wrote that Jesus came to his people and while most did not receive him, those who did were/are given power to become the sons of God. Without Jesus, in other words, no one may obtain the status of a son of God or eternal life.

The Apostle John, in a few verses, defined Jesus Christ as the very word of God and the source of all life. For John, all of these things defined the character and calling of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

John's emphasis on Jesus as the life and light of the world is visible throughout the gospel and letters of John. Jesus as the light of the world is a recurring theme. We sometimes refer to someone who leads a movement as the light-bearer. This person carries the light to show the way we should go. For John, Jesus was more than just one who carried the light, Jesus was the Light.

The theme of light is wonderfully presented in one of the greatest revelations of all time, Section 85. In verses 2-3, it is shown that we live in a world that is dependent upon light. Jesus is presented in this revelation as the light of truth and the light of creation. Look at D&C 85:2c, "As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made." Jesus is the power by which the sun was made and continues to exist and by which it fulfills the will of God. Thus, he is the light of the sun. This same light (D&C 90:3) is the light of knowledge, wisdom, redemption and government.

John laid the foundation for our understanding of who the Messiah is. He taught that the Messiah of God must walk in the light of God and truth. His light must be powerful and eternal. That sounds great, but why is it important? It is important because Satan attempts to deceive us by presenting himself as a messiah of darkness.

The messiah of darkness is called the anti-Christ. Anti-Christ operates in darkness, which means he does not operate in truth. He is also lifeless and his teaching and practices are associated with death. Most people do not like those things being fully reported up front. To make his message more palatable, the anti-Christ presents his doctrine as leading to light, but this is a drastic redefinition of terms. He violates the mandate of God—speak the truth—and Satan calls that which is good evil and what is evil he calls good. Any doctrine that claims to be light, but diminishes or redefines or denies Jesus Christ cannot be the true light of God. Those imposters all emanate from the prince of darkness.

People are quite susceptible to the message of the anti-Christ. Darkness infiltrated the message of the gospel and changed what was taught and believed. Little by little the gospel of the light-filled Messiah becomes shaded and darker as we are tempted to look anywhere but unto Christ our Savior. This dwindling in righteousness always results in apostasy.

The Lord God of Heaven and Earth moved to restore the light of the gospel in the last days. The Restoration came with restored power, carrying a brilliant message of truth and a pure testimony of the gospel in the Book of Mormon. This is the renewed message of the Messiah about which John wrote.

Jesus came as the Messiah, the sent one of God for our redemption and salvation. The Restoration appeared by God's hand saying, "As once the Messiah came to provide salvation, so again the Messiah is coming to reclaim this creation and establish his kingdom." The day is not now far off when the arm of the Lord will be revealed and Jesus the Messiah will appear. Every promise of the covenants of the Father will be fulfilled.

Until that day appears in its fullness, we are called to continue in faithfulness. Ask the Lord for discernment and understanding. The power of darkness will seek to overthrow the light and it will seem to be a question in doubt for awhile. Nevertheless, the Messiah, the Light of the World, will be fully revealed as the victor. †

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Jesus the Messiah

By Gary R. Whiting

Names are important. They are how we are known to others and our name becomes the summary of who we are and what we have done. A few simple examples will make the case. For Americans, the name George Washington brings to mind many things related to America, the Revolutionary War and the Presidency. Many will think about the story of the cherry tree and truth-telling. There are other names with similar power to stir up a host of thoughts. Some of these are Adolph Hitler, Mother Teresa and Abraham Lincoln. These are historical names, but the same is true for the current politicians and candidates for office. Names represent who a person is and what he or she has done.

No name stirs the hearts of humans more than the name of Jesus. Some erupt in extreme anger at the name of Jesus. Others imagine a man of integrity and sound teachings. For others, the name of Jesus stirs deep emotion and worship. Is there a best way to think about Jesus? His very name actually guides us in the answer to that question.

Jesus is the name he was given by his parents. Joseph was instructed by an angel to call Mary's son by the name of Jesus. The angel said, "thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 2:4). His brothers, sisters, neighbors and people at the local synagogue would have called him by this name. Jesus was a name that was fairly common in Israel. Joshua is another form of the same name.

Every time someone spoke his name, Jesus, they were saying, "He shall save his people from their sins" or Savior. Many people have names with special meanings and we typically ignore those meanings in the common use of a name today. It was probably the same with those who knew Jesus. Because other people would have shared that name, it is likely that the special meaning, though true, was generally not considered.

There is another name associated with Jesus the Savior that identifies him as a character unmatched in all of human history. When combined with his first name,

Jesus, it must elevate our consideration of the man who was born in a manger of Bethlehem. This additional name for Jesus is Messiah. Messiah is, however, not an ordinary name. It is a formal title applied to someone filling a specific position. It is like the titles "president" or "ambassador."

Messiah is a title given to a special servant who is set apart to serve God in a particular role or duty. It means "the anointed one." Anointing was a special act performed by someone in authority to set someone apart for a sacred duty before God. Many people have been anointed to serve God in special roles. This is generally not done anymore, but there are several examples found in the Old Testament and are associated with three specific types of service in Israel.

The first type of anointing was used in the ordination of priests. Moses anointed Aaron "to sanctify him" (Leviticus 8:12). Aaron was sanctified or set apart for the specific task of being the high priest for the performance of all the sacrifices prescribed in the law. Only those specifically set apart for this duty could perform it lawfully.

The second example of anointing was to set apart prophets. The Old Testament prophets often appear on the scene of scripture with very little background history and we are not told how they were chosen or if a special ceremony of setting apart took place. There is one example of a prophet being named and anointed. Elijah was told to anoint Elisha as his successor, and to set apart a king of Israel.

And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room (1 Kings 19:16).

The previous scripture also points to the third category of persons who were anointed. The kings of Israel and Judah were anointed. Elijah anointed Jehu and Samuel, a prophet of God, anointed two kings, Saul (1 Samuel 10:1 and 1 Samuel 15:1) and David (1 Samuel 16:12-13).

The three categories of positions worthy of an anointing were priests, prophets

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and kings. The oil was a symbol of the Holy Spirit and the evidence of prophetic calling as one chosen of God. There is no evidence that any single individual in Israel held more than one of these posts and no one that was anointed to all three positions. This is where Jesus is unique. He is God's anointed in all three positions.

Well, as we've seen, Jesus is the Messiah, the Anointed One. That idea sends us back to the Old Testament, where three offices of people were anointed with oil: prophets, priests, and kings. When the Messiah comes, the Anointed One par excellence, he holds all three of these offices. He is the ultimate Prophet, the ultimate Priest, and the ultimate King ...

These offices help us to understand Jesus' work. As a Prophet, he brings us the true word of God. As Priest, he brings sacrifice (ultimately, the sacrifice is himself) and makes intercession. And as King, he rules all things in his mighty power ... (Frame, J. M. (2006). *Salvation Belongs to the Lord: an Introduction to Systematic Theology* (p. 146-7). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing).

Jesus came as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. It was his calling or anointing. He received this calling before the foundation of the world. We see the sign of his anointing or choosing on the bank of the Jordan river after he was baptized in water by John the Baptist.

And Jesus when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and John saw, and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Jesus. And lo, he heard a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him (Matthew 3:45-46).

When we refer to Jesus as Messiah, or more commonly as Christ, we are declaring him to be the ultimate and primary servant of the Father. He was given authority in every aspect of ministry and Lordship over us. There is no one who is remotely near to who he is in power, wisdom, mercy, justice or dominion. He is King of Kings, the one true and great High Priest and the true and living word of God.

He came into the world as the Messiah to be our Jesus, the One who takes away the sin of his people. He grants to those who follow him in faith a holy anointing. The Apostle John wrote of it as an unction (1 John 2:20). He explains it further by writing:

Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; but he that acknowledgeth the son hath the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye shall continue in the Son, and also in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. These things have I written unto you concerning them

that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him (1 John 2:23-27).

This anointing is the gift of the Holy Spirit which is the Father's gift of confirmation in the Messiah. In this anointing is the power of life, the power of knowledge and understanding, the power of prophecy; i.e., the testimony of Jesus (Revelation 19:10).

We enjoy this special unction because Jesus the Christ acted faithfully in his unique role as the Anointed One of the Father. By his atonement we enjoy the fellowship of a covenant relationship with the Father. We are enlivened and nourished by the presence of the Holy Spirit because of Jesus Christ.

A virgin, a chosen vessel of the Lord, conceived and gave birth to a little child in Bethlehem. The angels bore witness of the Messiah's birth. We are also called to bear him witness as we share in his anointing, by grace through faith in the unique, precious, Only Begotten of the Father, our Redeemer and Savior, Jesus Christ. †

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Anti-Christ: A Prelude to the Second Coming of Christ

By Chadwick Nestman

Restoration Saints have been blessed with the fullness of the gospel in the Book of Mormon and with modern day revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants and the Inspired Version of the Bible. These scriptures tell us about the fall of Satan (also known as Lucifer, Perdition, and the devil). This story is found in Genesis 3:1-5; 2 Nephi 1:101-103, 120-125; and D&C 76:3i-j. We discover Satan was cast out from the presence of God the Father because he wanted the power and glory of God and because he rebelled against God's Only Begotten Son, Jesus, the Redeemer and Messiah of all mankind.

When he was cast out from the presence of God, which was before the creation of Adam and Eve, he became miserable, knowing, in the end, he and his followers would be destroyed and spend an eternity in the lake of fire. Because he was miserable, he swore an oath to do everything in his power to also make mankind miserable.

We know, from the scriptures, God created man to have joy by choosing to know God and his Son and following his commandments. Satan focused his misery toward us with the intent of taking away our agency and turning us away from God and Jesus. Make no mistake, Satan was a son of the morning and was in God's presence in the beginning and he is armed with an arsenal of spiritual and temporal weapons to use against us, including angels and spirits cast out from God's presence when Satan rebelled—all who can appear to us posing angels of light.

Jesus tells his disciples to be on the lookout for false Messiahs (anti-Christ, i.e., precursor types of the one who would appear before the second coming of Christ, or as Paul said, pseudo-Christ) for they will come for no other reason than to distort and weaken the disciples' testimony and witness of Christ (Matthew 24 and 2 Thes-

salonians 2). Paul also wrote in the 2nd letter to the Thesalonians (see also Amos 8, Revelation 12, and 1 Nephi 3:221-237) that before Christ returns to gather his followers who have endured to the end, there must be a significant falling away or rebellion of believers because they chose to follow a counterfeit Christ, in other words, the Anti-Christ; not just an anti-Christ, but the Anti-Christ specifically chosen to imitate Christ.

John, writing in the latter part of the first century, told the Saints the return of Christ was predicated on a number of events that must occur first, including the emergence of the Anti-Christ (that is, the final representative of Satan before Christ returns). He also said anti-Christ has been in the world since its beginning, and would remain in the world until its end, preaching the gospel but not believing in it, posturing themselves as being better or smarter than others (sometimes even God), establishing counterfeit churches, growing rich because they oppressed the poor, dressing in expensive clothes, changing the gospel to be more palatable to people, and deceiving the believers of Christ by means of miracles (Revelation 13). In essence, making it more difficult for the Saints to readily identify the Anti-Christ who would appear just before the second coming of our Lord.

While the general Christian world debates the relevance of these scriptures and how they are interpreted in the context of our corrupt cultures regarding the reality and return of Christ, the Restoration has an advantage because of the Book of Mormon and the continuing revelation in our day. Mormon was commanded by God to abridge the many Nephite, Lamanite and Jaredite records into a single book given to Joseph Smith Jr. to translate and publish. What may be surprising is that God chose the records for inclusion in this book, allowing Mormon to

create layers of prophetic insight. One of those insights is that we have a few patterns showing what an anti-Christ is, how they rebel against God and how they lead Christian believers away from the straight and narrow path. These patterns help us identify the many anti-Christ to come, but the Anti-Christ.

In each case, the identified anti-Christ rebels in unique ways, but their overall goals are the same. They lie, deceive, alter the gospel, attack the church, and make others miserable. The Book of Mormon anti-Christ were Sherem (Jacob 5), Nehor (Alma 1), Zeezrom (Alma 8) (although he later repented), and Korihor (Alma 16). It should be noted; however, that Zeezrom was more of a zealous proponent for Nehor rather than an anti-Christ in the same context as the others listed. He is added to this list of anti-Christ because he provides us with a pattern of behavior which will lead us away from Christ if we are not watchful, prayerful and repentant.

Each of these anti-Christ were powerful orators, smart and cunning, used flattery to win disciples, accused God's priesthood of teaching false doctrine, believed their understanding of the scriptures was better than the prophets, did not believe in divine revelation, changed the gospel to make it more palatable to the populace, were filled with pride, and introduced some form of priestcraft. They created an easier and less moral religion that relied on a paid ministry. To be fair, Sherem confessed he knew the gospel and its attendant revelation was true, but was deceived by the power of the devil (Jacob 5:30-31). Likewise, Korihor said he learned his doctrine from an angel of the devil (Alma 16:66-69), leading us to conclude that they accepted a form of revelation or supernatural understanding or learning, but their fault was in rejecting divine revelation. Coupled with what is found in Isaiah 14, Daniel 7-11, and Judges 14-16 (where some believe the story of Samson is a prophecy of the Anti-Christ), we have sufficient knowledge to recognize the signs of the times.

Prophecies are being fulfilled and the times in which we live are indeed portentous, yet we also see that people of the world are awakening from a deep sleep and searching for the gospel of Christ. Perhaps this is why

D&C 6:2 tells us that the time of harvest is now and all who thrust in their sickle are called to do the work. People are awakening from a deep sleep, where their eyes have been clouded by the promises of these anti-Christ, and now searching for the promises of the Lord—promises the Restoration can easily fulfill with its vigorous witness of the Book of Mormon, the restored church and the restored priesthood. There is a hope among many of the Saints that the purpose of the Book of Mormon will finally be fulfilled as the Lamanites, Gentiles and Jews respond positively to its message, and look with hope to reestablish and fulfill the covenants of Jacob and Abraham. It is a time when we will soon see unprecedented conversions to Christ, but unfortunately, it will also be a time when we will see the rise of the Anti-Christ.

This will be a time when the elect of Christ, those who have been baptized and are true followers of his commandments must prove their faithfulness and endure to the end—even if it means martyrdom. Unfortunately, his oratory, deeds, demeanor, and his message will lead many of the Saints away from their belief in Christ. It will also be a time when his followers will willingly have a mark placed on their forehead or hand identifying themselves as followers of the Anti-Christ (see Revelation 13:15-18; 14:9,11; 15:2; 19:20; 20:4); an idea that is not as farfetched as it may seem given today's technology of micro-chip use in internal medicine, identifying lost dogs, credit card identification and security, and vehicle or phone geo-positioning. In addition, this will also be a time when there will be only two churches representing what the Book of Mormon refers to as the worldwide "church of Christ", and the worldwide "whore of the earth" or "the church of the devil." The Saints, also referred to as the "elect" in the Book of Mormon, will be found worldwide but will be few in number. On the other hand, the elect will be empowered with the power of God never seen before in the history of the world (1 Nephi 3:220-237).

If we use 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 and the Book of Mormon as a guide, we can extrapolate that he will be a great charismatic orator and religious leader, especially if so many people willingly worship him instead of God. In many ways, he will seem to be an enchanting man, capti-

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vating the multitudes, even as he exercises “immunity” from the law on account of his wealth, power, or fame (see Isaiah 1:29-30 as referenced in Gileadi’s book, *The Last Days*, Covenant Communications, 1991). Other personal characteristics of the son of Perdition are:

- He will emerge from Gog (Ezekiel 38:2 NKJ), perhaps as a political genius (Revelation 17:11-12 KJV) and military genius (Revelation 6:2, 13:2 KJV) by first controlling the Western power block (Revelation 17:12 KJV) then making a seven-year covenant with Israel but will break the agreement within three and a half years and attempt to destroy Israel (Daniel 9:27; 12 KJV).
- He will be evil (that is, The Man of Sin or the Man of Lawlessness) but appear as a savior (Daniel 11:21; 8:25; 2 Thessalonians 2:3,8; 2 Corinthians 11:14-15 NKJ) both commercially (Daniel 11:43; Revelation 13-16:17 KJV) and religiously (2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:8 KJV) by destroying all of the false religions of the world—perhaps all religions except Christianity—but will in the end set himself up as God, profaning the temple (Revelation 17:16-17; Daniel 11:36-37; 2 Thessalonians 2:4,11; Revelation 13:5; Matthew 24:15 KJV).
- He will be seen as an intellectual genius (Daniel 8:23 KJV).
- He will have great speaking ability and will be extremely outspoken (Daniel 7:25; (NKJ); Daniel 11:36 (KJV); Revelation 13:5 NKJ).
- He will have a fierce countenance (Daniel 8:23; Daniel 7:20 NKJ) energized by Satan himself (Revelation 13:2 KJV).
- He will be very proud (Daniel 11:36; 2 Thessalonians 2:4 NKJ).
- He will not desire women (Daniel 11:37 NKJ).
- He will have supernatural powers provided by Satan (Daniel 8:24-25; Revelation 13:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:3, 7-8 NKJ); his god will be the god of forces or fortresses (Daniel 11:38 KJV).
- He will convince everyone that all is well. Even the Saints will say that “all is well in Zion” (2 Nephi 12:22-26) and under his leadership it will certainly seem that way. No one will refer to him as the Anti-Christ, the

beast, or the Son of Perdition. In fact, the majority of the world will exalt him and follow him willingly, even when he blasphemes the Lord, reviles against revelation, dismisses the return of Christ and moves to isolate the church and its activities.

It is into this divided and tormented world that Christ will return to end the reign of the Anti-Christ, binding him, his followers and Satan so there will be no sin for 1,000 years. It will be a time of peace, when Enoch’s Zion will return to earth and join with the New Zion (or New Jerusalem) created in the Americas, and a time when Jerusalem of old will be rebuilt because of the war and destruction caused by the Anti-Christ. Thus, we see that the rebellion of Satan to usurp God’s power and authority recorded in Genesis continued from Adam to a day soon coming. Yet, we know that God’s plans cannot be thwarted! Satan and his followers will fail even if it means that many souls will be lost in the process. Not because God wills it, but because the lure of modern idolatry, indifference, rebellion, and loss of righteousness they choose to turn away from God.

Brothers and sisters, we live in a time when we witness wars and rumors of war, the increase of pandemics, and a state of escalating violence. These tools will be used by Satan to take away our reliance on God and weaken our faith. We live in a time when the religious foundation upon which this nation was founded is constantly being eroded and through neglect, reluctance to speak out, and a willingness to live our witness of Christ Jesus our country is quickly moving away from the Christianity of the scriptures and becoming a Christianity of convenience and tolerance of the overall erosion. It is time for us to unite in a common cause, strengthened by not only one another’s faith but by our faith in the Lord. Further this it is time for us to prepare ourselves, our families and our neighbors for the events soon to unfold. And finally, we must fervently and actively seek to establish the cause of Zion in our day so there may be a refuge for believers in the Lord Jesus where they can find peace and rest.

May we ever be led by the Spirit that we may be watchful for the anti-Christ and the Anti-Christ, and reject them when they come. †

USA National Conference Organizes; Mission Statement Approved

By Alan Smith

The United States National Conference completed its organization as a separate legal entity at the conference held October 13-15, 2016. This allows funding and planning which is distinct from the General Conference and activities of the Joint Conference of Restoration Branches. In the early years of the JCRB, the two conferences were not distinctly defined and the original organizing documents needed updating. This culminates two years of effort at the general and national conferences to clarify these issues. The U.S. National Conference remains affiliated with the JCRB General Conference.

Most of the resolutions passed by the National Conference set up the internal rules of the conference. Rules of participation and representation were passed. The duties and selection process for conference officers were also discussed and approved.

The ministry focus for the National Conference was defined with the adoption of a mission statement on Thursday afternoon, October 13, 2016. In its final form, the mission statement of the conference reads:

The mission of the U.S. National Conference is to breathe revival into the Saints living within the United States, to strengthen their testimony, and cast down the spirit of division that exists between people and branches of the Restoration Movement. We seek unity with our brothers and sisters, regardless of affiliation, in the furthering of the work of the restoration of the House of Israel, and will do this by cultivating righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, that the kingdom of God may be alive among us.

With the mission statement approved, the conference voted in favor of the following purposes or goals of the national conference:

1. Be a source of education and knowledge exchange between branches.
2. Conduct business and consider resolutions for actions from member branches and members at large.
3. Encourage and uplift the Saints of the USA to empower the spreading of the gospel.
4. Identify and discuss those issues which are national in nature which affect the furthering of the spreading of the gospel in the USA and, where appropriate, pass legislation concerning those issues.
5. When national issues touch or are related to international issues, to propose resolutions affecting inter-

national issues to the general conference for their consideration.

6. Make other recommendations in the form of approved resolutions to the JCRB General Conference for their consideration.

Rules of representation and organization were adopted which are similar to those of the Joint Conference of Restoration Branches. These will be posted on the website shared with the JCRB (conferenceofbranches.org). They follow the pattern adopted by the Reorganization under the prophetic leadership of Joseph Smith III.

Like the General Conference, “Participation by voice and vote in the conference is extended to all persons who have an authoritative baptism and are in good standing in the Church of Jesus Christ” (approved National Conference resolution).

During the business session, President Fred Greene reported a meeting between representatives of the General Conference and representatives of the Restoration Church of Jesus Christ was held on the evening of October 13. The meeting was very positive and may lead to increasing cooperation between the two groups, including participation of members of the Restoration church in the activities of the General Conference and the U.S. National Conference.

The conference approved a budget of \$2,250 for the conference. There was a surplus at the beginning of the conference and offerings resulted in all expenses being covered and a reported final balance of \$4,310.00 in the National Conference bank account. Because of the generous response of the attending Saints, the final two offerings of the conference were collected to bolster the Missionary Funding for the JCRB.

In other action, the conference elected officers who will serve through the end of the next conference in October 2017 and named members to the logistics and credentials committees. Officers elected included:

Fred Greene, president
Dan Sherer, vice president
H. Alan Smith, secretary
Marilyn James, treasurer
Jan Jordison, recorder

Named to the logistics committee, which will work on planning the next conference, were Sally Simmons,

Lisa Newman, Duane Newman, Barbara Giertz, Chris Taylor, Alissa Hughes and Barbara Jordison. The conference officers are part of this committee also.

The credentials committee, chaired by the elected recorder, Jan Jordison, includes Tom Beem and Frank Frye. The members serve for one year terms.

The conference also voted to lend \$1,000 to a group of youth raising funds for a proposed missionary trip to Tahiti for a youth camp in the summer of 2017. The money will be used to purchase t-shirts to be sold as a fundraiser. When the first \$1,000 is paid back, an additional \$1,000 would be available for a loan to the group, if required. Hailey Norman is leading this effort.

The final Credential Committee report revealed a total of 15 branches were represented at the conference. A total of 29 branch delegates and nine branch alternates attended, representing 10 branches. There were 79 member delegates and seven guests registered.

This year's conference was held at the East 39th Street Community of Christ in Independence, Missouri. This facility was excellently matched to the needs of the conference. It had plenty of space for meetings of the conference and for quorum meetings. It was clean and very conducive to worship. A spacious, paved and well maintained parking lot was very much appreciated. The conference attendees and officers thank the members of this branch for their kindness in making this facility available for out use.

The U.S. National Conference is planning to reconvene no later than the third week in October 2017. †

Conference Ministry Report

By Gary R. Whiting

The U.S. National Conference was organized around multiple worship services. As is common for conferences, prayer meetings were held each morning. These were well attended and the presiding ministry was excellent. The Saints responded well to the Spirit's invitation which contributed to the sense of union and fraternity that marked the conference.

Preaching ministry was provided on Thursday by Apostle Gary Whiting at 10 a.m. and Patriarch Neil Simmons and High Priest Jerry Vickery at 7 p.m. Brother Simmons delivered the word of the Lord which he received while in prayer and meditation in the Arizona desert. Brother Vickery was ordained to the office of Patriarch on Saturday afternoon. His ordination was previously authorized by the April 2016 General Conference. Chadwick Nestman, Frank Frye, Chris Taylor and Patrick McKay served as presenters.

Thursday afternoon was used for a series of discussions on various aspects of the education process. The emphasis was on a lifestyle of education rather than a classic discussion of developing a teaching program.

Friday morning preaching was from Patriarch Dan Sherer and Friday evening by Patriarch Ron Smith. Both brethren were blessed in the evangelical arm of their ministry on Friday.

Two classes were presented on Saturday morning. Nathan Sherer taught on stewardship principles and Joel Loving presented a class on unity. Brother Loving's class was particularly insightful as he described the means by which true unity among people occurs. He described the impossibility of unity if we seek to respond to one another first-hand. He showed that our first response must be to love God (a rebound from God first loving us). A second rebound occurs when God's love is reflected to us through affirmation and revelation. Once this process has advanced thus far, we are in a position to interact with each other (a third rebound). This process is continuous and every interaction with each other is filtered through these three steps or rebounds resulting in each person first responding to God and then to each other out of the guiding hand of God's love.

Fred Greene led a discussion in the afternoon designed to identify areas of future ministry and focus for the 2017 U.S. National Conference and future conferences.

Patriarch Fred Greene spoke the ordination charge on Saturday afternoon. During this service, Jerry Vickery was ordained to the office of Patriarch Evangelist by Apostles Randy Vick and Gary Whiting.

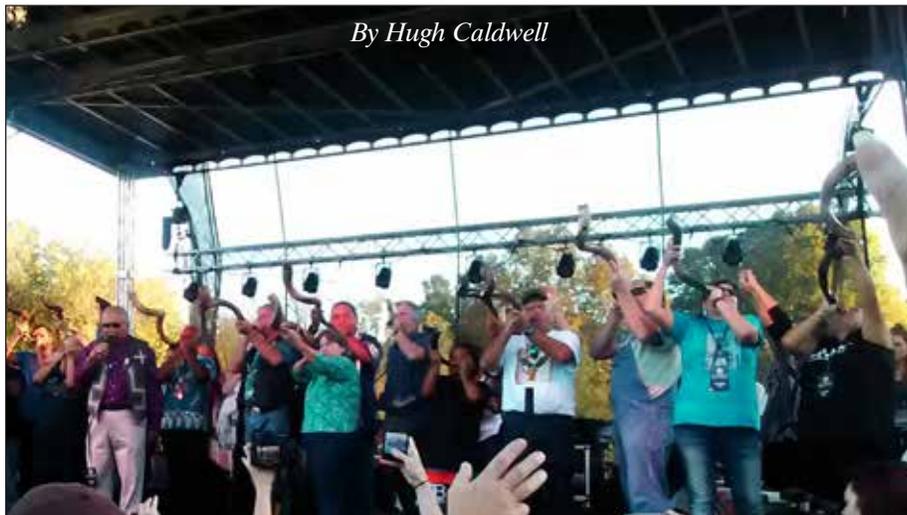
Apostle Randy Vick preached at the final service of the conference. He testified of the powerful presence of the Lord he experienced during his ministry in Malawi and Mozambique with Seventy Rex Curtis.

With a very strong emphasis on worship and the preaching of the word of God, this conference was very much like a reunion. Video recordings of the preaching services and the classes on Saturday may be viewed on the conference's UStream page. The link is available on the conference web page (conferenceofbranches.org). †



Randy Vick, left, preaching. Joel Loving, center, teaching a class. Ron Smith, right, with his "hot rod."

Native Americans Arise in Strength at ANNA Gathering



By Hugh Caldwell

Native Americans blow the shofar to show their reliance upon the God of Israel.

It has been called a great awakening, a stirring up, a monumental shift in God’s work among the Native Americans. Book of Mormon believers would say it is prophecy being fulfilled. Across North America, the indigenous peoples are calling for a change—a change of heart and a turning back to God.

This past October, in a display of religious unity rarely seen in the last five centuries, thousands of Native Americans and white Christians gathered at Tahlequah, Okla., to pray for the healing of our nation.

Sponsored by the intertribal group All Nations North America (ANNA), the weekend event drew participants from as far away as Hawaii, Alaska, Canada and Mexico. A subsequent rally took place at the Washington Monument in Washington D.C. on October 21, 2016.

Organizers described the gathering in Tahlequah, which is the capital of the Cherokee Nation, as a solemn assembly based on the Book of Joel. “When there’s no hope for a nation, we go to Joel chapter two” said spokesman Lou Engle. “The Lord said ‘call a solemn assembly, sanctify a fast, and afterward I will pour out my spirit upon you.’”

Proclaiming a fast of this kind is not unprecedented among Christian leaders. But what distinguished this assembly from previous gatherings was its initiation by Native Americans, who believe that God is calling them to spark a spiritual renewal throughout North America.

“It’s time for us to rise up and become the spiritual warriors that God wants us to be,” said one Indian minister, who drew rousing cheers from the outdoor crowd. Several speakers, recalling a prophecy given by evange-

list Billy Graham in 1975, referred to the Native Americans as a “sleeping giant” that is now being awakened by the stirrings of the Holy Spirit.

In preparation for the event, organizers called a 40-day fast, which ended the last day of the conference. As one speaker noted, “We are a fasting people. This is who we are.” At least some of the participants fasted the entire period without food.

The highlight of the conference, conducted mainly on the Cherokee Nation Cultural Grounds, was an outdoor assembly on Saturday that lasted twelve hours. One after another, tribal representatives took to the stage, calling the people to repentance. Worshipers knelt on the stage, their faces bathed in tears, while others prostrated themselves on the ground. At one point, around midday, the clear blue sky was graced by the sight of two eagles flying overhead. Among several tribes, including the Navajo, the appearance of two eagles is a sign of divine favor.

Healing Through Forgiveness

In their prayers and testimonies, the Native Americans clearly demonstrated that they were embracing a vital component of Christ’s teachings—the need for forgiveness. This was the one message which dominated the conference.

“Forgive us for our own unforgiveness toward the white men,” one prayed. “Forgive us for our bitterness, our hatred. Forgive us for our witchcraft; for putting defilement upon the land.”

Several leaders acknowledged that the numerous in-

justices inflicted upon them by the white man had never been resolved. But they testified that under the direction of the Holy Spirit, they were willing to reconcile with a painful past, forgiving all who had brought shame upon their people.

“We’re calling for forgiveness without apology,” said Brent Rose, a Comanche pastor who leads a group called War Cry Ministries in Talihina, Okla. “That means we do not wait for the government or the white man to approach us first and offer their apologies. The government can make apologies everyday, but until we are ready to forgive, there is no change.”

For Brent Rose and other leaders, the time for change has now come. And it must start with the Native Americans. “Go and take this message back to your towns and villages,” Rose urged the people. “We’re calling on this next generation to come forth and lead a renewal that will sweep over this land.”

He envisions his people spearheading a Third Great Awakening—one that would add to the two previous evangelical revivals that had such a profound impact upon America in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

Supporting testimonies were shared by many of the non-natives who attended. Charlene Laman, who travelled from Pennsylvania, shared a dream she had been given two weeks earlier. She saw an angel, standing over the First Nation land, his right hand holding what she described as “the times and seasons, like that spoken of by Daniel.” With a loud voice, the angel declared, “What was before, will no longer be.” She believes there has been a shift in the heavenly realm, and that God is now bringing in a new era for the native peoples—a time and season of great spiritual power.

Healing for Former Enemies

Several ministers prayed that the blessings of healing would come, not only to the villages and reservations, but to their respective nations—the United States, Canada and Mexico. They asked God to bless the very governments and people that had once oppressed them.

“God heal our hearts, heal the land, heal our great nations,” they pleaded. “Raise up houses of prayer. Heal our children and the generations to come.”

Joyce Kitson, a Hunkpapa Sioux who leads an intercessory prayer ministry in North Dakota, shared in private conversation about her own efforts to spread the gospel among her people. She noted that on the Sioux reservations, where poverty, alcoholism and suicide runs rampant, many hearts remained hardened.

“I go all over, talking to tribal leaders, telling them that they need to forgive,” she said. “That’s the only way their hearts can be changed. Only then can the Holy Spirit bless them and heal them.”

She recalled a spiritual dream in which she saw a black pillar descending from the sky and touching the ground. Then another pillar, a bright white shaft, came down alongside the first and dispersed it. She understood



Tablequah is the endpoint of the Trail of Tears. The ANNA conference was intended as a start of a new journey of faith, putting aside the wounds of the past.



Pastor Brent Rose (right) delivers a message on forgiveness.



Speakers exhorted, prayed and testified in the name of Jesus Christ.

that the black column represented a root of bitterness, common among her people, and that it could be effectively removed by the pure light, or the workings of the Holy Spirit.

Many spoke of the shame that they knew in their youth, of abuse and drugs, and broken families. Chasity Sandoval, co-founder and director of ANNA, said that as a teenager growing up on the Navajo reservation, she developed a hatred for Christians and everything associated with church. In her troubled home, she even considered suicide. But after her conversion to Christ ten years ago, she began traveling the continent, preaching the message of peace, reconciliation and spiritual regeneration.

Her persistence paid off when she received divine direction to organize an assembly. “While I was fasting, I received a vision of North America, and arrows were being launched into the heart of the Northwest, and the arrows had the names of our elders on them,” she recalled.

“I received a song that said ‘call a sacred assembly and call the elders,’ the same verse that is in Joel. It is in my heart to raise up young native people in their identity in Jesus Christ and to mobilize the people for prayer, and that’s what ANNA is.”

Trail of Tears Revisited

In selecting Tahlequah as the site for October’s conference, Sandoval chose a place that, to Native Americans, symbolizes the pain, hardships and broken treaties of their past. It was in Tahlequah that the Trail of Tears ended. More than sixteen thousand Cherokee were forced to march that trail in November 1838, after being ordered off their tribal lands earlier in the year by President Martin Van Buren. Exposed to sub-freezing temperatures and deprived of food and shelter, they lost a third of their number along the way.

There is a link to our heritage beyond our belief that the Native Americans are descendants of Lehi and their story is told in the Book of Mormon. While the government of the United States pushed the Indians to the west, a few hundred miles to the northwest another forced exodus was taking place. Thousands of Latter Day Saints were forcibly uprooted by the governor’s decree from Far West, Mo. At the threat of extermination by the Missouri militia, these families, also without adequate food, clothing and shelter were trudging through the snow eastward to Illinois.

Earlier this year, in an open gesture of reconciliation, about seventy white Christians met in Tahlequah, to commemorate the sufferings of the Cherokee. Starting at the trail’s terminus, they walked the thousand miles back to Eastern Tennessee, where the infamous trek began.

“We came down here to feel their pain,” said Lou Engles, who helped Sandoval organize the ANNA

conference. “Unless we’ve walked in their shoes, we will never begin to understand what those people went through.” He added that one of the purposes of the ANNA gathering was to implore the help of God in reversing the curses of the past.

“Here in Tahlequah, in the heart of the Cherokee Nation, forgiveness and renewal can be released,” he said. That spirit clearly prevailed as various groups approached each other to reconcile longstanding animosities and failures.

One black minister asked his Indian brothers to forgive the blacks for excluding the Native Americans when they marched for civil rights back in the sixties. An Indian minister countered by asking forgiveness for the sins of his forefathers, who had owned black slaves. “Every sin committed against us, as a people—we release our brothers and sisters of every sin,” one tribal leader prayed.

A Kinship with Israel

Several spoke of the need to stand with Israel as a nation. Not only do many of the Native Americans empathize with the Jews in their struggles for survival, but in private conversation, some confided that they felt a spiritual tie with Israel. When told about the Book of Mormon, several expressed interest in its message, saying they could accept the belief that Jesus Christ had walked on the American continent with their ancestors.

One woman, who said that she was three-quarters Indian and one-quarter white, shared a recent experience, in which the Lord had revealed to her that she was a descendent of Ephraim and Manasseh. “But,” she added with a sigh, “I don’t know what all this means.” She expressed gratitude when she learned that the Book of Mormon could help her understand her Hebrew lineage.

As more native peoples embrace the teachings of Jesus Christ, the opportunities to share the restored gospel will expand. Although only five percent of Indians consider themselves Christians, their minority voice is showing unmistakable signs of growing in strength, and, predictably, in number.

At the same time, by conducting their recent gatherings, the Native Americans have set an example that Latter Day Saints can follow. They have called their solemn assembly. They have prayed, fasted and prostrated themselves hours on end, begging God for forgiveness. They have sought to reconcile with their former oppressors.

The scriptures say that the Lamanites shall blossom as a rose. They shall build up the New Jerusalem. Restorationists can assist in this glorious cause by humbling themselves before God as their native brothers and sisters have done, putting aside all pride, malice, and hardness of heart—then will come the outpouring. †

Working Together as the Body of Christ

Part 2

By Jonah Bates

From a sermon at the 2016 General Conference-JCRB.

In Part 1 of this article (see October 2016 Beacon) I spoke of how God revealed himself to me as I search for him. In this part of the article I will share the second part of my testimony which is about how God revealed himself when I was called to the office of Seventy. [For a more detailed account of this testimony, email me at 70batesjonah@gmail.com].

In February, 2013, Gary Whiting called me on the phone and said the Presidents of Seventy, in council together, had received evidence of a call for me to the office of Seventy. When he said that, I was taken aback because this was never an office I thought the Lord was calling me to. I knew for years that we had the testimony of my brother Micah's calling to that office someday, but I had never thought about such a calling for me. Also, for the sake of honesty, I must admit that at this time I was also struggling with fear. I was afraid of spending more time in the missionary work as a member of the Seventy. I had fears about what that would mean for my career and family life. I had fears about what that would mean for my relationship with the church at large with the divisions present. It may sound strange but I had a deep-seated fear of being in foreign places where they speak only a different language than I do. Because of this, in my prayers I was asking the Lord for a miraculous sign to me, one that I could not deny. I'm a little ashamed to admit it now, but for a long time I also told the Lord that I would not accept this direction through one of my brothers or sisters of the Church because I was afraid they could be biased.

So I started to fast and pray about this. I went to my wife, Morgan, and told her, but asked her not to tell anyone about it. We didn't tell anyone for weeks and made it a matter of fasting and prayer. Over the next year, we prayed and fasted many times. When we first started we thought, "Okay, we're going to fast and pray for a couple of days this week and the Lord will give us an answer." Then that week was up so we planned the next one. We said, "Okay, we're going to take these two days

out of the next few weeks to fast and pray." Then those two days were up.

The Lord started to give us amazing things. For the first time in my life, I was given the gift of spiritual dreams, which I never had before. I had dreams where I woke up and literally felt the Spirit of God with a message which told me certain things I needed to learn. And yet there was no answer on the question we were asking. Looking back, the messages of the dreams were clear. In the first dream: "Prepare me a sanctuary." This helped us know how to come before him in worship when we asked our question.

In the second: "Do not put your trust in the arm of flesh." That led me in a very deep way into how I was to ask the Lord. We kept asking the Lord and asking the Lord, and spiritual things came out of it. Through our fasting and prayer, the Lord started to make my ministry deeper, in prophecy and through administration to the sick where the Holy Spirit would flood over us so we knew that person had been healed immediately; and they were. That is not necessarily a gift that God had given me often before, i.e., knowing that the healing had happened. We did missionary work together and our testimonies just grew and grew, but still there was no answer to the main question.

Almost a year went by and the Lord started to lead me to the idea that he wanted to use his body to give me the answer and specifically, he wanted to use the people of the branch in Columbia, Missouri, where we were attending. If you don't know, there's some background you need to understand. The branch in Columbia does not support the Joint Conference of Restoration Branches. Because of this, I

I had dreams where I woke up and literally felt the Spirit of God with a message which told me certain things I needed to learn.

felt timid to ask them to fast and pray specifically about my call to the office of Seventy. So even though I had this feeling it was what the Lord wanted me to do, I put this off for three or four months and didn't ask them. Finally, through a series of events of repentance and coming before the Lord, the Lord reconvicted my heart one Wednesday night at prayer service that I needed to ask them to pray and fast with me on a specific day. So I did.

It was the week before conference. I texted the men from the branch to pray and fast with me on Wednesday that week. Just to show a glimpse of the servanthood in this group, these men agreed immediately to fast and pray for me without asking why. As we prayed and fasted, I tried to put myself before the Lord as humbly as I possibly could. We had a men's meeting that night at my house. All the men of the branch got together. I gave a little talk and we had a good spirit and afterward they went home with no one approaching that they had received anything from God in response to our fast. Having had so many times like this in the past year where I felt led to pray a certain way and ended up spiritually blessed, but without further direction on the main question, I must admit that I honestly did not expect the answer to come this time either and was preparing myself simply for whatever the Lord saw fit to give. I thought to myself, "I guess we're going to have to ask for another year of praying and fasting to have the answer."

The interesting thing was that my heart was satisfied and I was finally in a place that whatever the Lord would say or give I was ready to receive and follow. Over the year of not receiving an answer, the Lord had begun to heal my fears. Just as I told this to one of my friends that was there with me, who knew what I was fasting and praying about, my phone started to vibrate. I opened it up and there was a text message from one of the men in the branch. It said, "Jonah, I read these scriptures while praying for you today," and gave a list of four scriptures from the Doctrine and Covenants: Sections 4, 133, 134, & 135. Grateful to have uplifting scriptures to read to the group of us there at my house that night, I got out my scriptures and started reading them. Then my jaw dropped when I began reading 133 and I had to stop, get everyone's attention, and read the rest of the scriptures aloud. As I read, the Spirit filled me and I could not deny that the material in those verses—besides those por-

tions for replacing specific personnel in offices—were the direct answer to the specific form of the question about my call. Still wanting the testimony to be firm, and make certain that the man had not chosen these scriptures for me based on previous desires for me for some purpose of his own besides inspiration from God, I texted him back and asked him to email me a summary of his fasting experience the day before.

The next day, he emailed me and complied. The message started with an "unusually long break for lunch" at work while he prayed and fasted. After prayer, he had felt led to open to those sections and showed how they were applicable for "the next step in [God's] plan for [my] life" as well as being much needed counsel for the church to unite in this endeavor.

These scriptures aren't usually used when you are giving inspirational quotes to someone. In those sections, the Lord goes through and step by step tells the answers to my questions. Read them for yourself and judge how I was to move forward. I could not doubt that this was the Lord speaking to me because this man had no other reason to share this testimony. He didn't know the question I was asking, and I think if he had, this may not have been the advice he would have given me. Again through sharing with the body of Christ I had found an answer. And again, this testimony lined up with other testimonies from individuals dating back to before Morgan and I were even dating; testimonies I might have doubted had I not had this experience.

I want to express to you the differences between these testimonies I have shared. In both, the Lord used his body to convince me of the truth of what he was trying to say. In the first one, you had a question that was before us and when the Lord spoke he said it was now that the things should be done. In the second one, if I had gone by the testimonies of those who were around me and not kept seeking the Lord, I would have missed out on something that the Lord was doing.

I want to say that to all of you tonight. I say this in comfort and in warning. We are not all on the same page. We are not on the same page spiritually. Some of us have gotten used to hearing the Lord over years and years of our lives. Others of us are just beginning our journey and we need to be patient with each other. In times when we disagree, it cannot even cross our minds that we will leave the work that has been entrusted to us all. If it comes to the

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point where we have a question before us to say whether something is a word from God—from the throne of glory—we should not take that lightly. We should take the opportunity to counsel together—to feed each other by the gifts that each of us are given—and use those gifts to help make the final conclusion as to whether any word that is put before us as the word of God is the word of God.

I want to end tonight by sharing with you an experience my wife and I had years ago. When we got married we compared these experiences and it was amazing to see how they fit together. The Lord had told us both that there would be a prophet coming to the church—that the Lord would raise up someone to bring prophetic leadership to the church in these last days, but it was necessary that his body be organized and together before that prophet would come. As the years have gone by, I've thought about that experience and wondered why did the Lord want us to be organized before the prophet comes? I've seen in this conference at least one of the reasons why. Imagine if a prophet were to come to us today and was to say there was something for the Lord for us. How many of us would be spiritually mature enough to know precisely at that moment that it was from the Lord? Maybe some of us. Maybe not others. Maybe we have struggles going on our life right at that exact moment. We may not be all on the same page. If we in our weakness would stay in that place, the only thing that could come from a prophet being sent to the church in these days would be division because some of us would say, "Yes I believe" and some of us would say, "No I don't believe." On the notion that this is from God in heaven, how can there be any middle ground? And yet, what I've seen is that the Lord has been bringing us together and preparing us by taking us from a broken and scattered people into a group that is here. He has given us the opportunity to learn to work together, learn to love each other, to learn to have patience until the people of the body—until each one of us—has such a conviction out of the mouth of two or three witnesses that these words are established. When we have that take place, we are ready.

I believe that the Lord is wanting to send us prophetic leadership in the church in these days, but I also believe that he is looking very strongly for a people who will not divide when that leadership is given, but that will hold fast,

and even keep a prophet accountable so that there are no words of man that enter into a prophecy that come through a prophet of God. Can you imagine for yourselves Joseph Smith Jr. standing and speaking in front of us today, and submitting a prophecy that he believes is from the Lord, and you as a body saying, "Thank you, Joseph," and then going and taking James 1:5 to heart and asking that anyone who lacks wisdom can ask of God themselves. I believe that is what the Lord is requiring of us because the ministries of the priesthood are not for just giving and giving ministry for ever and ever. Ephesians 4 again tells us that these ministries are given for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry until we all come to the fullness of the stature of Christ—in a unity of faith, each and every one of us.

God wants to perfect you and me until we can recognize his voice so clearly that none of us have a question whether it is his voice or not. But it takes us ministering together, being patient with each other. I wanted to leave you with this concept of maturing as a group, maturing as a church, maturing as a body. It requires something very, very deep of us. It requires being like Christ—each and every one of us. It may require suffering the wounds like he did on the cross. Have you suffered wounds that hurt you? Compare that now to the physical wounds that were put on the body of Christ when he went to the cross. Then, if you can, try to imagine what kinds of wounds caused him to sweat great drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane—the wounds of eternity for all our sins—the times that we have betrayed him, each and every time that we have turned against him. Then see how little he is requiring of us to bear with each other right now—to be able to have a body who deliberates together.

I'm so grateful for the progress we have made. I have to tell you that Saints, I am really grateful for that, but I think that there is a lot more to do. I think there is a lot more to deliberate. I think that once we have come to that place where we are firm in our determination to stay together until these things are made known, and continue together performing the work we can agree on, that the Lord will do things in great and marvelous ways—ways that we cannot deny—and move forward into his kingdom until each and every one of us is able to stand in the presence of God and hear his voice for eternity. †

God wants to perfect you and me until we can recognize his voice so clearly that none of us have a question whether it is his voice or not.

Isaiah: Prophet of the Restoration

Part 3, continued from Volume 8,
Number 6 of the Beacon

By Chadwick Nestman

In Part 2, we extended our discussion of Isaiah from needing the “Spirit of Prophecy” to needing an understanding of the “Letter of Prophecy.” We also introduced Jesus’ commandment to search the scriptures and what it meant to “search.” Searching the words of Isaiah is of particular importance since it is estimated that about 30 percent of Isaiah is quoted in the Book of Mormon, a fact that should be a clue in itself of how important it is to understand how Isaiah crafts his words and thoughts. Isaiah, like the Book of Mormon, is well-defined and configured into not just a story but layers of messages requiring a knowledge of how prophecy was written within Jewish stylistic conventions; a knowledge of Jewish history, politics, and geography; a knowledge of how the Jews are taught; and most importantly a spirit of prophecy. In doing so we will find that many of the prophecies of Isaiah are being fulfilled in our day, and that the warnings he provided about the political and spiritual realities including the evil doings of God’s people are exposed and explained. Knowing these realities and messages allow all those who believe in Christ to ensure their lives are in order, that they have repented and renewed their covenant so they can avoid the woes and tribulation that is to come.

In this final part of the article we will look at the prophecy of Isaiah as a window into the Last Days, the role the gentiles will play in bringing the words and covenants of the Lord to the remnant of Lehi and Mulek’s descendants, and finally the restoration and gathering of the twelve tribes of Israel as the chosen people of God. Central to our understanding of these final thoughts will require that we digress to review the “Great and Marvelous Work to Come Forth” discussed in the Book of Mormon as a prelude to understand how Isaiah is the prophet of the Restoration. Gileadi (*The Last Days: Types and Shadows from the Bible and the Book of Mormon*; (Covenant Communications), 1991, p55-104) tells us that an angel enumerates to Nephi (1 Nephi 3) a number of events that will happen in the future of Nephi’s descendants including,

- Christian apostasy.



- Discovery of America by Christopher Columbus.
- The arrival of the Pilgrims in America.
- The establishing of many gentile peoples on this continent, the scattering of the Lamanites, and acquiring independence from England.
- The dissemination of a “defective” form of the Bible in America because it lacks “the fullness of the Gospel.”
- The rising preeminence of the American people.
- The restoration of the gospel among the Gentiles.

Then the angel tells Nephi something that seems out of place:

“For the time cometh, saith the Lamb of God, that I will work a great and a marvelous work among the children of men; A work which shall be everlasting, either on the one hand or on the other; Either to the convincing of them unto peace and life eternal, or unto the deliverance of them to the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds, unto their being brought down into captivity and also unto destruction, both temporally and spiritually, according to the captivity of the devil, of which I have spoken” (1 Nephi 3:214-216).

The angel continues foretelling the future to Nephi and gets to a point that he stops and commands Nephi not to write the things that he will tell him after this point. Nephi is told that the Apostle John will write the remainder. Doctrine & Covenants 90 tells us that “it shall come to pass, that if you are faithful, you shall receive the fullness of the record of John” (D&C 90:3a), but we haven’t received that fullness yet because of our unfaithfulness.

The Restoration movement, in general, has always

interpreted this “Great and Marvelous Work” as the publishing of the Book of Mormon. Through his detailed literary and scriptural analysis, Gileadi tells us that although Nephi was commanded not to tell the story of John, he does quote Isaiah 48 and 49 as a clue to us of what that work will be either directly or as types or patterns of things to come. These clues contain the characteristics of the “Great and Marvelous Work” which commences with Joseph Smith Jr (2 Nephi 2:24ff). This commencement is the foundation upon which the actual “Great and Marvelous Work” will be based. Additionally, the period between the “commencement” and the “Great and Marvelous Work” is a time of preparation which may include and culminate in a new creation of the heavens and the earth (Isaiah 65:17-18). There is also the indication that there will be another deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, where Egypt is a metaphor for a rich country declining in importance and military might, a country which considers itself the “center” of the world but in reality is oblivious to what is really happening in the world, and is a country full of idols—objects created by the hands of man including religions not based on God, architecture, technology, and wealth. This “Exodus” is repeated several times in the scriptures and used as an example of what will happen in the future. Gileadi concludes that part of this “Great and Marvelous Work” will be preeminently revelatory in nature, possibly from the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon, the sealed portion of Ether, the Brass Plates, the lost books of Adam, and/or the fullness of John. Doctrine & Covenants 76, Ether, Helaman, 3 Nephi and Mormon give us clues that these revelations include a knowledge of the mysteries of God and perhaps comprising all things shown men in the past, things that were sealed up to come forth in their purity including words that are not within man’s natural power to utter or write.

This manifestation of the power of God happens because the righteous are threatened by the wicked, who are “ripening for destruction.” It will be closely associated with those who come to Christ and exercise their faith even as the brother of Jared did. Miracles will be commonplace and will confound the wise, that is, the wise in the ways of man’s wisdom. At the center of this manifestation of power will be the Three Nephites themselves (3 Nephi 13:43-44). According to Isaiah 11:11-12 all of this results in a sudden and dramatic gathering of Israel from the four corners of the earth.

Events related to the “Great and Marvelous Work” include the restoration of all things and the great and terrible day of the Lord, including

uncommon tempests occurring at sea, fiery and cataclysmic destructions falling upon the lands and cities, a murky gloom blackening out the heavens, battles and plagues resulting in the extinction of peoples, and the Lord’s deliverance of the righteous. The restoration of all things mentioned above include:

- Conversion of the Lamanites and all the house of Israel to the truth and light of Christ.
- The house of Israel takes possession of former lands of inheritance after they believe in Christ.
- The resurrection of the righteous, that is, those who kept the commandments of God. Remember, the church was restored in these latter days with a specific goal to draw all mankind to Christ and the kingdom of God.

Having a grasp of the “Great and Marvelous Work” that is to come, we now need to turn our attention to understanding the integrated prophecies of Isaiah. Again, we turn to Gileadi (*Windows on the Prophecy of Isaiah*, (Hebraeus Press), 2015, pp 189-208). Isaiah 1:1 tells us that his prophecies are one vision and Isaiah 46:10 tells us that he is “foretelling the end from the beginning.” Thus, we can assume that Isaiah is telling us that if we do not consider his work as one vision of the end times from the beginning of time, we will misunderstand what he is telling us and miss the signs we need to recognize in order to be among the righteous when the “Great and Marvelous Work” unfolds. One of the apparent realizations when we view his work as a single vision is that political and church affairs parallel each other for good or evil, that is, if the leadership of the people are righteous then their church life will be righteous. Likewise, if the people turn away from God, their government will become just as wicked. Lies and falsehoods will test people’s loyalty: when asked about the end-times Jesus told his disciples “that, if possible, they (false Christs and/or prophets) shall deceive the very elect, who are the elect according to the covenant. Behold, I speak these things unto you for the elect’s sake” (Matthew 24:23-24). Isaiah expands on the statement made by Jesus by pointing out that the liars and purveyors of falsehoods will also pick on the poor and needy, making their lives even more miserable (Isaiah 32:7).

Amos 3:7 told us that “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, until he revealeth the secret unto his servants the prophets.” Isaiah 20:2-4 and Isaiah 16:14 tell us that God commanded him to give Israel and Moab three years’ warning that judgment was coming from Assyria and Babylon, respectively. We too have been warned through the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah,

One of the apparent realizations when we view his work as a single vision is that political and church affairs parallel each other for good or evil ...

Ezekiel, Joel, Amos and others—the Day of Jehovah; God’s day of judgment is coming! But before this day comes—before the heavens “vanish as by smoke” and the earth’s inhabitants “die in the manner of vermin”—God gives the world a chance to repent (Isaiah 51:4,6). Paul says “there shall come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). This “falling away” is apostasy and, as mentioned, apostasy occurs not only in the church (that is, all Christendom, including the Restoration) but also in the government.

Remember, Cain was called Perdition (Gen 5:10), so a son of Perdition is anyone who rejects the counsel and commandments of God; however, the son of Perdition spoken of by Paul is a composite of all those who rebel. Isaiah tells us that this son of Perdition will be the Anti-Christ, one who styles himself as a demi-god, who will unite modern versions of Assyria and Babylon to attack God’s people, but will perish because of the loyalty of God’s elect. Before this anti-Christ perishes he will cause utter destruction upon the whole earth. This total world destruction comes as a thief in the night (Luke 12:44; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10); meaning that most will not even recognize that the anti-Christ is the thief, or as Gileadi translated Isaiah 10:13-14—“I have done it by my own ability and shrewdness, for I am ingenious. I have done away with the borders of nations, I have ravaged their reserves, I have vastly reduced the inhabitants. I have impounded the wealth of peoples like a nest, and I have gathered up the whole world as one gathers abandoned eggs; not one flapped its wings, or opened its mouth to utter a peep.” This destruction will initiate a heavenly cataclysm similar to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

What we have to remember is that while Isaiah used “current” and past events to prophesy about the future of Israel and Judah, he also uses those “current” and past events to speak to us and our day. We cannot assume that, because we are part of the Restoration, we will be protected from the events Isaiah forecasts. Our only hope is in our faithful and righteous loyalty to God, and in our unashamed testimony of Jesus, the Messiah and Only Begotten Son of God. It is then that being part of the Restoration means something; it is then that we will be called the “elect.”

Yet, Isaiah sees our day and calls us to repent of our idolatry and injustice. Remember, “idolatry is any activity that diverts the attention of the worshipper from the true God and is law to a counterfeit” (Ibid, *The Last Days*, page 10). As we study the scriptures, we see repeating patterns of calling men to repent, establishing a

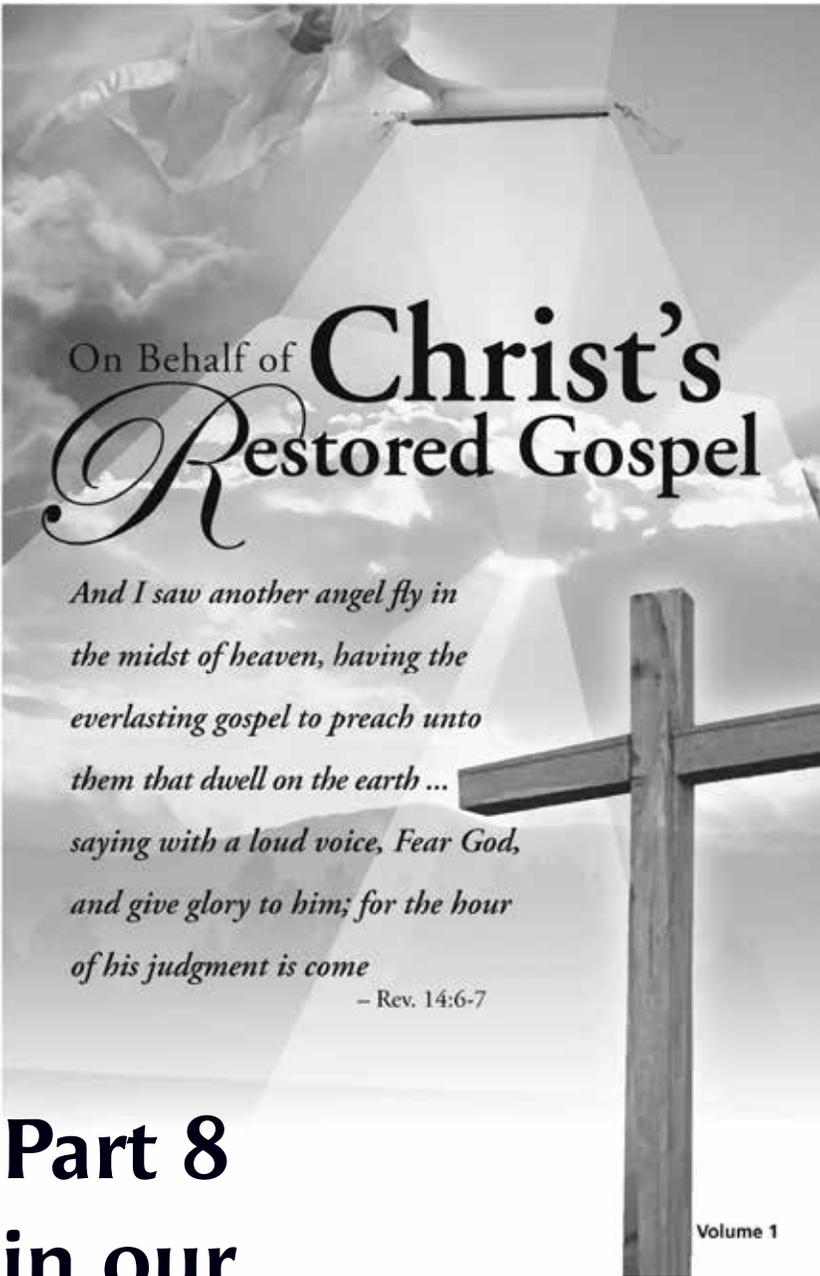
priesthood, forming a church, and then a gradual decline to general apostasy, usually caused by idolatry. While some make a conscious decision to move to idolatry (hence they are called Sons of Perdition), many more gradually become idolatrous because the things of the world seem to be more important. Soon we begin to question the truth of the scriptures or revelations, denying those parts that condemn us because we believe we are too righteous or good for them to apply to us. Idolatry includes the coexistence of true and false worship, often leading to the false gods assuming the authenticity that belongs to God. This coexistence often leads to the need for preserving institutional convention rather than seeking communion with God.

It is easy to list incidents of idolatry in the scriptures because they are usually identified by the prophet. To identify them today is harder, but they are there. Violence and sex was rampant with Israel when they worshipped Baal, but today we find it in television shows, magazines, movies, books, dress codes, music, and tattoos. We revere violence in sports and concealed carrying of guns; prefer outdoor sports and activities like dirt bikes, four-wheelers, skiing, boating, and camping all in place of regular worship of God. In spite of warnings by Jesus, our lives are ruled by our pursuit of riches; bigger homes, more expensive cars, higher paying jobs, and belonging to the right clubs.

In summary, Isaiah saw a vision from the beginning of time to the end of time but was commanded by God not to record the vision before his time but instead to write a series of prophecies based on events that were to occur during and shortly after his lifetime. These prophecies were carefully worded and ordered to provide a structured outline of events, persons, and places that would define the completion of God’s plan of salvation. His style and patterns were so well developed that they were used in the Book of Mormon to fashion their prophecies for the Lamanites, Jews, and the Gentiles of our day. Paul told us that “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Corinthians 13:1) and we have Isaiah and the Book of Mormon with the same prophecy of Last Days, but more importantly a call for all men and women of the world to come to Christ, believe that he is the Only Begotten Son of God, that he condescended to become man and take upon himself our sin, be crucified, and resurrected that all will come before him to be judged righteously according to how they followed God’s commandments.

Just as the Book of Mormon defines the Restoration, Isaiah is indeed the prophet of the Restoration. †

We cannot assume that, because we are part of the Restoration, we will be protected from the events Isaiah forecasts.



On Behalf of **Christ's**
*R*estored Gospel

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth ... saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come
— Rev. 14:6-7

Volume 1

Part 8
in our
continuing
series

**Answers to
“Forty Provocative
Questions,” Continued**

By Jim Reeves and Jon Tandy

31. Fred M. Smith, former RLDS Prophet stated, “... is it not true that the Lord called upon educated men to represent him?” [2] Why would an “inspired man of God” make this statement in light of the Biblical statement, “When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men they were astonished and they took note” (Acts 4:13).

The questioner deceptively quotes only a portion of the statement by Frederick M. Smith, without giving the full context. A more complete quotation from President Smith’s sermon is given below.

I have been disposed to think that a good many of our people have put a premium on ignorance. That has come from an inaccurate application of the statement that “the Lord shall choose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.” It has been made to do service never intended. I do not believe we are justified in permitting ourselves to remain in ignorance.

Let me make myself clear without unduly exaggerating the importance of the educational and intellectual. I urge this strongly because I have seen the necessity among our people for more emphasis being laid on the educational features. I do not underestimate the value of the spiritual in the development of a man, but when a man is devoting exclusively his energy and time to this phase of development he is making an abnormal individual of himself. As a matter of fact is it not true that the Lord called upon educated men to represent him? Take the staunch defenders of the early Christian faith. Was Luke an educated man? Was John? Was Mark? Was Paul? All of them were educated. The ministers that Christ himself chose were men of that class largely. Even fishermen in those days were men of considerable rank. They were not as the fishermen of today. Now take the case of Joseph Smith himself. Was he an ignorant man? Perhaps as a boy when the work found him he was, but he did not remain that way. Do you know I have heard men picture Joseph Smith as an ignoramus in a way it

While the critics like to point out apparent discrepancies in the accounts of the witnesses, there are many significant points of agreement among all those who were closely associated with Joseph during that time..

has made my cheeks burn with shame. That Joseph Smith was unlearned so far as schools were concerned I grant; but even Lily Dougal in her book gives him credit for having devoured a Latin grammar in two weeks. Can a lazy man do that? ... I would not have you neglect spiritual things for the intellectual, for the church will demand a higher plane of spirituality and with this higher plane of spirituality will be a higher plane of intellectuality than we have ever occupied in the past (Sermon by Frederick M. Smith, "The Peculiar Social Values that We Hold," Joint Council Address, April 16, 1912. Quoted in Norman D. Ruoff, ed., *The Writings of President Frederick M Smith 1* (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1978): 16-27.

It is clear from this passage that Frederick M. Smith is not saying that only educated people can represent the Lord. He was speaking to a need in the church to become more educated in order to develop individual gifts and to become more effective witnesses, along with increasing in spiritual growth.

32. *Why is there no Biblical or historical record of a man named Lehi, who had lived in Jerusalem all his life, and who along side Jeremiah, prophesied of the coming destruction of Jerusalem?*

Does the Bible list every single person who ever exercised the gift of prophecy? Of course not! The Bible records a number of prophets whose words are not included in its text. It also refers to other prophets without giving their names. No one should be surprised that the Bible does not list Lehi as a prophet. However, the Bible tells that there were many prophets and divine messengers during the reign of King Zedekiah, whom God sent to warn the people to repent of their sins.

And he [Zedekiah] did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the Lord. And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel. Moreover all the chief of the priests, and

the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem.

And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy (2 Chronicles 36:12-16).

33. *Why did Emma Smith, David Whitmer, Martin Harris, and Isaac Hale all agree that Joseph Smith put a seer stone in a hat (an occult device) to translate the Book of Mormon, when Joseph himself said he translated it by the gift and power of God (Saints Herald, Nov. 15, 1962, pp. 14-22)?*

Some of the witnesses to the translation of the Book of Mormon stated that Joseph used a seer stone in the translation process. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, who were the principal participants in translating the book, mentioned only the "Urim and Thummim" and "Interpreters," which are described as "two transparent stones set in the rim of a bow."

While the critics like to point out apparent discrepancies in the accounts of the witnesses, there are many significant points of agreement among all those who were closely associated with Joseph during that time. They testified with certainty that Joseph possessed metal plates, which he obtained from the Lord. They testified that Joseph translated the book by the power of God, not through his own skill or intellect. He translated through his faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to divine direction, not by means of occult influence. These testimonies, even given by some who were later disfellowshipped from the church, continue to provide one of the most powerful evidences of the truth of the Book of Mormon.

The use of a seer stone or the Interpreters (or other temporal devices, such as casting lots) for obtaining a knowledge of God's will, is not necessarily occultism. The Bible records several instances in which God revealed his will through such devices to holy men. Joseph of Egypt possessed a divining cup (Genesis 44:5).

God commanded the high priest to cast lots for divining the scapegoat (Leviticus 16:8). Moses (Numbers 34:13) and Joshua (Joshua 18:10) divided the promised land by lot. Joshua discerned the transgressor, who turned out to be Achan, apparently by casting lots (Joshua 7:17-20). The apostles cast lots to decide whom God selected as a replacement for Judas (Acts 1:26). Gideon discerned God's will by asking God to first make his fleece wet with dew while the ground remained dry, and then make this fleece dry while the ground became wet with dew (Judges 6:37-40). The Mosaic Law commissioned the priest to give a woman accused of adultery a drink of holy water and dirt from the Tabernacle floor to discern her guilt or innocence. If her thigh rotted and her belly swelled, she was guilty (Numbers 5:17-28).

All these examples describe the use of objects that occultists might use for divining purposes in their rituals. Their use in biblical times was not for the occult, however, but for holy purposes. The difference was that God approved their use. In the same way, he blessed Joseph Smith with divine inspiration in the translation of the Book of Mormon, through the instrumentality of a temporal instrument, which Joseph referred to as "Urim and Thummim."

[Editor's note: A recent book on this subject may be interesting for those who want to know more about this subject. It is *From Darkness unto Light*, by Michael Hubbard MacKay, Gerrit J. Dirkmaat and published by Deseret Books.]

34. *How could Alma, in the Book of Mormon, have been a High Priest when he belonged to the tribe of Joseph (Manasseh), and not the tribe of Levi? The Bible teaches that High Priests must be descendants of Aaron and belong to the tribe of Levi (Mosiah 11:17, 9:2, 1 Nephi 1:165, Numbers 3).*

Alma was not a high priest of the Aaronic order. He was a high priest of the Melchisedec order, which is a different office and is not limited to the lineage of Aaron.

35. *Why would Joseph Smith name Isaiah and Esaias as two separate men when they are one and the same? Esaias is the Greek name for Isaiah! (D&C 76)!*

According to the Book of Mormon, there was a prophet named Ezaias, who lived sometime before the days of Jeremiah (Helaman 3:54). He and the more familiar prophet Isaiah are represented as being two different persons, with the differentiation in the English text being made by the two variants of the name. While there may be no direct evidence confirming the existence of another prophet named Isaiah (or Ezaias), there is certainly no evidence to say that there could not have been another prophet by that name in Israel before 600 B.C.

36. *Why would Nephi tell the people 600 years before Christ, to "... feast upon the words of Christ" (2 Nephi 14:4)?*

It is curious that evangelicals criticize the Book of Mormon on this point, when many evangelical scholars hold to the view that the appearances of God in the Old Testament represented Christophanies, or preincarnate appearances of Christ. For instance,

In addition to the Incarnation, God's eternal plan apparently called for many preincarnate appearances of Christ as the "Angel of the Lord" to various men and women in Old Testament times. It would seem from the scriptural evidence that the Father appointed Jesus to be the visible manifestation of God among people in both the Old and New Testaments. Note that the Angel of the Lord and Jesus were both sent by the Father—one in the Old Testament [Judges 13:8-9], the other in the New [John 3:17] (Ron Rhodes, *Christ before the Manger—The Life and Times of the Preincarnate Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 15).

Critics who accept the premise of the above question assume that Christ could not have made himself or his word known to Old Testament saints. This view ignores the possibility that God, in the person of Christ, can and did make himself known before the Incarnation, and that men could have placed their reliance on Christ's words.

37. *Since High Priests could only serve in the Aaronic (Levitical) priesthood by commandment of God, why did Joseph Smith include them in a Melchizedek priesthood?*

The question could be asked in response, "Since high priests could only serve in the Aaronic priesthood by commandment of God, how could Jesus have been a high priest, because he was not of the lineage of Aaron?" The answer is obvious. Jesus' high priestly office was not of the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchisedec (Hebrews 5:10).

The Aaronic priesthood included an office of high priest, but the need for that office ended in the sacrifice of Jesus. The Melchisedec order also includes an office of high priest that is different from the high priest office in the Aaronic order (Hebrews 7:4-18). It is the latter office of high priest that was restored by Joseph Smith to the Melchisedec order.

38. *How could Nephi have used a compass over 500 years before Christ (1 Nephi 5:190), when the magnetic compass was first used by the Chinese around 1100 AD?*

The questioner mistakenly equates the Book of Mormon Liahona with a magnetic compass, when the Book of Mormon makes no such claim. In fact, we are told it was a "round ball of 'curious' workmanship" (1 Nephi 5:11). It had been "prepared ... by the hand of the Lord" (2 Nephi 4:17), it ceased working during periods of un-

faithfulness (1 Nephi 5:190), and it commenced working again upon repentance (1 Nephi 5:208-209).

The Liahona operated not by magnetism, but rather by the power of God according to their “heed and diligence” (Mosiah 1:24) and “according to their faith in God” (Alma 17:71-78). It operated by the power of God and even gave direction in the form of written words from time to time (1 Nephi 5:32-35); again, according to their faith and diligence. The Liahona led them by spindles and by written directions, all attributed to the power of God.

39. *Why would Joseph Smith admonish his people not to drink “wine or strong drink” (D&C 86) and then attempt to construct a bar in the Mansion House and only renege when his wife Emma declared, “Either that bar goes, or I go”?* (Saints Herald, Feb. 1999, p. 18, Doc. and Coy. Sec. 86.)

Section 86 of the Doctrine and Covenants, commonly referred to as the Word of Wisdom, was given by the Lord “not by commandment, or constraint, but by revelation and the word of wisdom” (Introduction to D&C 86). In this section, the Lord advised the Saints against the consumption of wine and strong drink. Yet because the revelation was not given by commandment, drinking was not strictly prohibited among the Saints.

When the city of Nauvoo was founded, it was granted a liberal charter by the state of Illinois. The charter permitted the establishment of universities, schools, militias, and allowed freedom of expression for all religious faiths, not exclusively the Latter Day Saint belief. One of the rights granted in the charter was for the City Council “to license, tax, regulate ... taverns” (*Times and Seasons* 2 (January 15, 1841): 285).

In December 1843, Orrin Porter Rockwell came to the city of Nauvoo. He had been a trusted friend of Joseph Smith during their recent trials in Missouri. It was decided to establish a tavern (hotel) for the purpose of entertaining the many visitors who came to Nauvoo, which would include a barbershop and a bar. Joseph, as mayor of Nauvoo at the time, granted Rockwell permission to conduct this enterprise.

While the establishment was being constructed, Joseph allowed Rockwell to set up his bar temporarily in the Mansion House. Emma strongly opposed this on returning from a trip to St. Louis. Joseph defended the decision at first because he felt obliged to help his friend get started in the venture, but very quickly yielded to Emma’s demand and had the bar removed from the Mansion House. This conversation was personally witnessed by Joseph Smith III, who also noted that the proposed tavern was never completed (Joseph Smith III, *The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith III* (1832-1914), edited by his daughter, Mary Audentia Smith Anderson (Independence, Missouri: Price Publishing Company, 2001), 34).

Joseph Smith was human, and as such made mistakes from time to time. This situation was arguably one of them. However, it should be noted that he did listen

to the counsel of his wife in this matter and was willing to repent of his decision.

40. *If a fourteen-year-old boy appeared at your door one morning and told you the Lord had shown him in a vision that all existing churches, (including the RLDS church), were an abomination in His sight and that he (the 14 year old) had been chosen by God to establish a new church which would be the “only true church” would you believe him? If not, why not? Joseph asked the people of his day to accept his testimony with only himself as a witness!*

A hypothetical question deserves a hypothetical answer: One would hope so, if Joseph’s experience was of God, as Restorationists believe. A number of other questions might be posed in response to the critic:

If you had been a respectable member of the Jewish society in the first century, would you have believed the testimony of a wild man dressed in camel’s skin, eating locusts and wild honey?

Suppose a fourteen-year-old shepherd boy came to you and your military council volunteering to face a giant over 9 feet tall, with armor weighing about 150 pounds, and spearhead weighing about 18 pounds. Suppose he told you that God would deliver the opponent into his hands, even though he refused to take with him armor and a sword. Would you believe him, considering you had already agreed that your whole nation would become slaves to the opposing nation if the giant won?

If a fourteen-year-old unmarried girl appeared at your door and told you that the baby in her womb was conceived by the Holy Spirit and that the child was the Son of God, would you believe her?

Would you have believed the son of a carpenter, when he said that he was really God come down in human form? One would hope so, yet many sincere religionists of Jesus’ day rejected him as the true Messiah. God repeatedly uses weak, but faithful, believers to accomplish the most consequential things he brings to pass. Because of this, the righteous must confess that it was God, and not any man, who could do such great things.

Further, the last sentence in Question 40 is utter falsehood. Joseph did not ask people to accept his testimony with only himself as a witness. There were three witnesses to whom the Book of Mormon and its truthfulness was revealed in mighty power by an angel of God. There were eight witnesses who testified that they had seen the plates and hefted them. The testimony of these eleven witnesses has been printed in every edition of the Book of Mormon. Many millions of other people have sought the Lord in earnest prayer and have received a confirming testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon.

And if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost; and by the power of the Holy Ghost, ye may know the truth of all things (Moroni 10:5). †

Toda and Dayenu

By B. A. Stuart

A recent episode of *The Land and the Book*, a podcast produced through Moody Radio, featured an interview with Melissa Briggs (September 17, 2016, www.moodyradio.org/The-Land-and-the-Book/2016/09-2016/2016-09-17-Melissa-Briggs/). She is a Hebrew instructor in the United Kingdom. During this program she spoke about the Biblical meaning of three different Hebrew words. One of the words was the Hebrew word for “thank you.”

“Thank you” in Hebrew is *toda*. She said that *toda* originated with the thanksgiving offerings under the Mosaic Law. It was a voluntary offering. When it was given, the supplicant would bring an offering, stand beside the altar and declare what God had done for them and express thanksgiving to God. The offering was shared with the priests and the poor for their support.

Thanksgiving, or *toda*, also carried the idea of praise with it. In thanksgiving, one is not only thanking the Lord or showing gratitude, but he/she is also praising God at the same time.

Briggs mentioned that the Jews sing a song of thanksgiving and praise to God as part of the Passover seder. It is called Dayenu and means “it is enough” or “sufficient.” She felt “Dayenu” caught the real essence of the word *toda*. The song recounts the mighty acts of God in delivering Israel from Egypt in the Exodus. It mentions something the Lord did and then says if he did nothing else for us, the one thing would have been enough.

The songs thanks and praises God for his miraculous acts on behalf of Israel and emphasizes the overwhelming abundance of God’s gifts to the nation. He not only did one thing, he did many. The first three verses read:

If He had brought us out from Egypt, and had not carried out judgments against them—Dayenu, it would have been enough!

If He had carried out judgments against them, and not against their idols—Dayenu, it would have been enough!

If He had destroyed their idols, and had not smitten their first-born—Dayenu, it would have been enough!

Why is this important for us to consider? One reason is it helps us think about the heart attitude we have in stewardship. Do we pay tithing just to complete a duty that God has laid upon us? Do we give an offering only to make the budget? Or do we give our gifts to God with a deeply thankful heart in recognition of the overwhelming abundance of God’s graciousness? Would you be able or willing to stand and confess why you are thankful to God for what you give each Sunday morning?

The Dayenu song confesses that even if God had only done one of the many great things he did, it would

have been enough. Are you grateful for what God has done for you and are you satisfied with what he has done? Or do you think you need or deserve more. Have you learned to be content with the blessings of the Lord? This is the heart expression of Psalm 23. David says he is content with what God is doing for him. There is no reason to fear hunger, thirst, fatigue, the shadow of death or enemies, because the Lord is there. He will do enough and will save.

Is God sufficient for you or do you need more? After leaving Egypt, Israel was discontent with the miraculous deliverance of God. Manna was not enough. Destroying the Egyptian army was not enough. Water from a rock was not enough. Hearing the voice of God and seeing his power on display was not enough for Israel. The first generation were never able to enjoy or be content in God and all of them died in the wilderness except Moses, Caleb and Joshua.

Stewardship is so much more than a duty. It is a way to thank and praise God. It is a way to begin to express gratitude to God for all he has

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That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen (Ephesians 3:17-21). †

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How has the Gospel changed your life? Write 200 to 1000 words and send them to beacon@conferenceofbranches.org or JCRB/Beacon, 1100 West Truman Road, Independence, MO 64050

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Dayenu

If He had brought us out from Egypt, and had not carried out judgments against them

— Dayenu, it would have been enough!

If He had carried out judgments against them, and not against their idols

— Dayenu, it would have been enough!

If He had destroyed their idols, and had not smitten their first-born

— Dayenu, it would have been enough!

If He had smitten their first-born, and had not given us their wealth

— Dayenu, it would have been enough!

If He had given us their wealth, and had not split the sea for us

— Dayenu, it would have been enough!

If He had split the sea for us, and had not taken us through it on dry land

— Dayenu, it would have been enough!

If He had taken us through the sea on dry land, and had not drowned our oppressors in it

— Dayenu, it would have been enough!

If He had drowned our oppressors in it, and had not supplied our needs in the desert for forty years

— Dayenu, it would have been enough!

If He had supplied our needs in the desert for forty years, and had not fed us the manna

— Dayenu, it would have been enough!

If He had fed us the manna, and had not given us the Shabbat

— Dayenu, it would have been enough!

If He had given us the Shabbat, and had not brought us before Mount Sinai

— Dayenu, it would have been enough!

If He had brought us before Mount Sinai, and had not given us the Torah

— Dayenu, it would have been enough!

If He had given us the Torah, and had not brought us into the land of Israel

— Dayenu, it would have been enough!

If He had brought us into the land of Israel, and not built for us the Holy Temple

— Dayenu, it would have been enough!

Into All the World

Compiled and edited by Gary R. Whiting

Tell Me Why

By Rev. Stan Key

Source: *The Center for Medical Mission's e-Pistle*, October 2016.

A ministry of the Christian Medical and Dental Associations

For the love of Christ controls us ... (2 Corinthians 5:14, ESV).

The real question that must be answered when it comes to missions is not Where? or How? Or even Who? The real question is Why? If we can answer this question, all other questions will take care of themselves. I have discovered at least eight reasons why we should be actively and passionately involved in sharing the Good News of salvation both across the street and around the world.

- 1. Obedience.** Matthew 28:19-20 is not called the Great Suggestion! It is called the Great Commission because it is a command, an order. Don't wait for some mystical calling. Obey! Jim Elliot asked, "Why do you need a voice when you have a verse?"
- 2. Justice.** God's blessings are meant to be shared (Luke 12:48). William Borderden stated the matter powerfully, "If 10 men were carrying a log, nine of them on the little end and one at the heavy end, and you wanted to help, which end would you lift?"
- 3. Final Judgement.** God will hold us accountable if we fail to share the message with those around us (Ezekiel 3:16-21). When asked if those heathen who had never heard the gospel could be saved, Charles Spurgeon responded, "It is more a question with me whether we, who have the gospel and fail to give it to those who have not, can be saved."
- 4. Love.** How can we obey the second commandment (Matthew 22:39) if we do not show concern for our neighbor's soul? Alexander Duff put it well: "I will lay my bones by the Ganges that India might know there is one who cares."
- 5. Christ's Return.** When we share the gospel with others, we are actually hastening the day of Christ's return. "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14, NIV 2011).
- 6. Personal Blessings.** Those who cling to possessions and seek security by playing it safe will lose both. But those who surrender to Christ and obey His call will find blessing upon blessing (Matthew 19:29, Luke 9:24, Acts 23:35).
- 7. No Other Name.** Only the name of Jesus has the power to save (John 14:6, Acts 4:12). All other names (Buddha, Mohammed, Krishna, Marx, Freud, etc.) lead to hell.
- 8. Societal Improvement.** The most important thing we can do to improve society (poverty, malnutrition, trafficking, disease, AIDS, war, racism, etc.) is to preach a gospel that transforms the human heart. Only redeemed people can redeem culture.
- 9. Revival.** Some think revival is the cause of missions. Perhaps the truth is just the opposite! Don't wait for a visitation of the Spirit to get involved. Get involved and then see God move! Christ promised His presence to those who go (Matthew 28:19-20).

Give up your small ambitions and get involved in the only cause that matters!

Quintin Cruz, Arturo Gomez and others prepare for missionary ministry in Honduras.



Missionary trip to Honduras

Seventies Arturo Gómez and Gary Metzger labored in Los Zorrillos and El Triunfo, Choluteca, in Honduras, July 14-August 2, 2016. This trip for Arturo was like going home. He assisted in the founding of the two congregations where we ministered. In the San Luis neighborhood we visited the home of Felix D., where we had baptized most of the family over 20 years ago. He had departed from the work and we were able to share with the youngest two children: Denia and Josué (now adults) who were too young then to know the restoration story. They recognized us from the photos of the baptisms of their family. We shared with them a number of times. They had real interest.

We held an afternoon study July 16 in the area known as La Permuta with Arturo's brother Pedro and non-member family. Arturo had two initial studies with some neighbors. Pedro and Gary invited neighbors to another meeting and there were over 30 visitors one afternoon. We held a fourth study at the end of our trip and about 10 ladies were present. They responded well to the message of the gospel and wanted more. Pedro's wife had already been warned by the evangelical pastors before our final visit.

On Sunday, we visited the Mormon church in Choluteca, where Arturo's cousins are the Stake and Ward Presidents. We shared of a need to prepare for the city of Zion and debated briefly the polygamy question.

When we arrived in El Triunfo, we visited in many homes where the couple had not married. In one home, where the two children were



Saints in Matapalos prepare to lay the foundation of a new meeting place.

members, we visited more than once before we left and the children prayed for their parents to marry and become members. We held a class with the priesthood one afternoon and in the back of the pickup several times as we traveled.

We had many opportunities to challenge the Saints and priesthood to higher spiritual living. We taught them to use the Lord's Day wisely and to tithe to the Lord of the increase of the fields the Lord would give them. The people were encouraged to give to support the poor, a widow and an orphan in their congregation. The congregation is in a secluded mountain area and where they farm corn and beans.

There had been constant instruction and visiting by some of the men and two men had been prepared for priesthood calls to the office of priest and elder. The man called to elder, Joel Cruz, is the son of the presiding elder in El Triunfo, Quintin Cruz. Joel has been staying in Siguatepeque in Chuck Sperry's recent absence from Honduras, and Chuck had assisted in his instruction as well in prior months.

Joel and his wife had fasted and prayed for her parents, who were devout Catholics. After many months, the door began to open to begin to share the gospel with them. One morning before 5am, her mom, Maria Esperanza, had a vision of the Lord Jesus, and with his arms outstretched he said, "You need to be baptized." She said to him, "Now?"

and Jesus said, "You need to wait for Genaro (her husband)." They were both baptized shortly afterwards.

The congregation now has 43 baptized members and is excited about building a chapel on some land recently acquired nearby. For three days while we were there, 10-12 men labored to haul 12 loads of rock, six loads of sand and to level part of the land for the building. They had a mind to work and we labored from 6 a.m. until noon, when the sun became very hot.

The Lord also gave two spiritual dreams to a person named Juana Antonia, who was visiting the congregation in El Triunfo. In each of two dreams, an angel appeared to her dressed in a long, white robe and asked her, "Are you listening to the word of God?" She said yes in each dream. In each the angel asked her, "Are you sure?" The first angel was Gabriel and the second was Zrael. Afterwards, somewhat puzzled the lady spoke with Quintin Cruz, and he asked her, "Don't you think they expect you to respond if you are listening!?" Shortly afterwards, she was married to her mate, and they were both baptized.

We worked with the congrega-

tion to prepare certificates of baptism, ordination and baby blessings. Happily, all of the certificates were properly completed.

There are now two elders and two priests active there in El Triunfo. We counseled them about ministering in pairs to help build up the work in their area and in surrounding areas where the seeds of the gospel had been planted. The people in El Triunfo have a mind to work and said "Amen," when we challenged them to grow. The building project is before them, both materially and numerically.

After leaving El Triunfo, Gary visited some of the ministry around the lake to assist them in understanding the law concerning the Seventy and the function of the Council of Presidents of Seventy for the calling of elders to the office of Seventy. One young man early in 2016 had a dream in which the Apostle Peter was leading him and his father into a different room. The Lord is preparing the way for his word to go forth.

Several classes were held with Joel Cruz in Siguatepeque to assist in his growth as a new elder. He has evangelized much on his own in the area and in San Pedro Sula, his hometown. He is an excellent worker for the Lord, visiting the homes of the people and challenging them to come to Christ.

There is much work to be done in all areas in Honduras, and we pray that the spirit of revelation will assist the Saints to unite and labor together even in the face of difficulties.



Saints at worship in Matapalos, Choluteca, Honduras.

Tahiti

Seventy Dan Norman, Elder Chuck Sperry and Ruthanne Norman left for Tahiti on September 28, 2016. A report of their labors will follow in the next Beacon. †

Jots and Tittles:

A Collection of Thoughts, News and Quotes

Porn and the Church

The Christian Medical and Dental Associations published a report on pornography in a newsletter dated October 2016. The article was authored by Dr. Ron Koteskey. It highlighted the results of a study commissioned by the Josh McDowell Ministry. They asked the Barna Group to conduct major research to find out how much pornography has permeated the family, the church and the culture.

The research involved nearly 3,000 people in four surveys during 2015. The surveys included parallel questions relative to age and sample. One survey included 813 people between 13 and 24 years of age in the general U.S. population. A second survey included 1,188 people 25 years of age and older in the U.S. The third survey included 432 senior pastors. The final survey included 388 youth pastors. These surveys were given to representative national samples.

The report is 160 pages long and includes many findings. Much of the report contrasts practicing Christians with those who make no profession of faith. Practicing Christians are self-identified Christians who agree strongly their faith is very important in their lives and have attended a church worship service within the last month.

Here are some disturbing findings about the general population.

- 27% of those 25-30 years of age began viewing pornography before puberty.
- 41% of male practicing Christians 13-24 years old seek out porn daily, weekly or monthly. In addition, 23% of those 25 or over do so as well.
- Those 13-24 ranked not recycling, overeating and overconsumption of electricity or water as each more immoral than “viewing porn.”
- More than half of all Americans seek out porn at least occasionally.
- Young women who seek porn are more likely than men to be involved in “sexting.” Among women 18-24, 69% had received a nude image and 51% had sent one. Among men 57% had received a nude image and 33% had sent one.

This is a disturbing report given the scriptural injunction to avoid lust and lasciviousness (things that incite lust, lewdness, sexual desire) and pursue purity and holiness. The report also described that the ministry is not immune from this plague. “One in five youth pastors and one in seven senior pastors use porn. That means more than 50,000 church leaders in the U.S. use porn.” Nobody likes to talk about this subject, but it is a powerful negative influence in the church and in the culture. Scripture is clear on this subject. A few examples follow:

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness (Galatians 5:19).

And verily I say unto you, as I have said before, He that looketh on a woman to lust after her, or if any shall commit adultery in their hearts, they shall not have the Spirit, but shall deny the faith and shall fear: (D&C 63:5a).

Therefore cease from all your light speeches, from all laughter, from all your lustful desires, from all your pride and light-mindedness, and from all your wicked doings (D&C 85:37a).

How Do You Know You Have Reconciled With Someone

By Darren Carlson

Ken Sande, in his book *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* outlines the four promises of forgiveness:

- I will not dwell on this incident.
- I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you.
- I will not talk to others about this incident.
- I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

—From the Missions 101 blog on www.trainingleadersinternational.org

There is a fund set up to assist with **International Delegate Travel**

to the General Conference.

Send Contributions to:
JRCB/Delegate Travel Fund,
1100 West Truman Road,
Independence, MO 64050
(USA)

Please note on your check the funds are for International Delegate Travel.

Jots and Tittles, *cont'd*

God Governs the Affairs of Men

The following words are from Benjamin Franklin speaking to the representatives present at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. After five weeks of arguing and vigorous discussion, little progress had been made in hammering out the U.S. Constitution for which all of us owe so much as Americans. Franklin reasons with those present, all of whom, or most of whom fought in the Revolution. His motion and resolve is to offer prayer to God in order to obtain his aid in drafting and implementing the Constitution. When they agreed to his proposal, it initiated and instituted the Senate chaplaincy that is with us to this day. Here are his words.

Mr. President,

The small progress we have made after four or five weeks' close attendance & continual reasonings with each other—our different sentiments on almost every question, several of the last producing as many noes as ays, is

methinks a melancholy proof of the imperfection of the Human Understanding. We indeed seem to feel our own want of political wisdom, since we have been running about in search of it. We have gone back to ancient history for models of Government, and examined the different forms of those Republics which having been formed with the seeds of their own dissolution now no longer exist. And we have viewed Modern States all round Europe, but find none of their Constitutions suitable to our circumstances.

In this situation of this Assembly, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able

The Little Beacon

Jesus teaches the Nephites

By Genie Simmons

Samuel the Lamanite had come to the Nephites and prophesied about the times of Jesus' birth and his death. His birth, he said, will be marked by a peculiar sign in the heavens; a day and a night and a day with no darkness during the night hours. The faithful had awaited that day and it had come. The prophecy was fulfilled. There was joy among the believers and many others had joined the church.

The sign when Jesus died had also been fulfilled. It had come as storms and earthquakes and fire. Whole cities sank into the ocean, others burned. The destruction was huge and was followed by a terrifying darkness for three days. After the destruction, people buried the dead, cleared the rubble and began to rebuild their shattered homes. Everybody was in shock, but they remembered what Samuel the Lamanite had said.

Later they went to Bountiful for

a feast day. They marveled over the changes in the land. They mourned the dead. They considered what to do next and they talked about Jesus Christ, who had been the object of Samuel's prophecies.

Suddenly their conversation was interrupted by a calm, gentle voice. At first, they did not understand what the message was. They heard the voice a second time and then on the third occurrence, the message became clear to them. They heard, "Behold, my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—Hear ye him!"

The whole multitude lifted their eyes toward the heavenly voice and they saw him; a man coming from heaven dressed in a white robe. It was Jesus. The crowd was so astonished that everyone fell to the ground. Jesus invited them to come to him and feel the marks from the cross on his hands and side. Everyone saw or felt the scars and believed. They knew

it was Jesus, the Messiah of whom Samuel had prophesied.

Jesus was remarkable. He was very active and yet gave attention to each person in a gentle, loving way. He called twelve disciples. He taught doctrine to the disciples and the crowd. He preached a sermon very much like the sermon on the mount recorded in the New Testament. He blessed the babies. He healed the sick. He taught them the Law of Moses was now fulfilled and taught them to live in the fullness of the gospel—a higher law.

Finally, toward the end of his time with the Nephite and Lamanite survivors, he asked to see their records. "Didn't Samuel the Lamanite come and prophesy to you? Didn't many of the dead appear to you and minister to you?"

The answered him, "Yes." Jesus responded, "Then why didn't you write it down?" Nephi did as Jesus commanded.

to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our understandings? In the beginning of the Contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger we had daily prayer in this room for the divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending providence in our favor.

To that kind providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establish-

ing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful friend? or do we imagine that we no longer need his assistance? I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—that God Governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, that “except the Lord build the House they labour in vain that build it.” I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of Babel: We shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and byword down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing Governments by Human wisdom and leave it to chance, war and conquest.

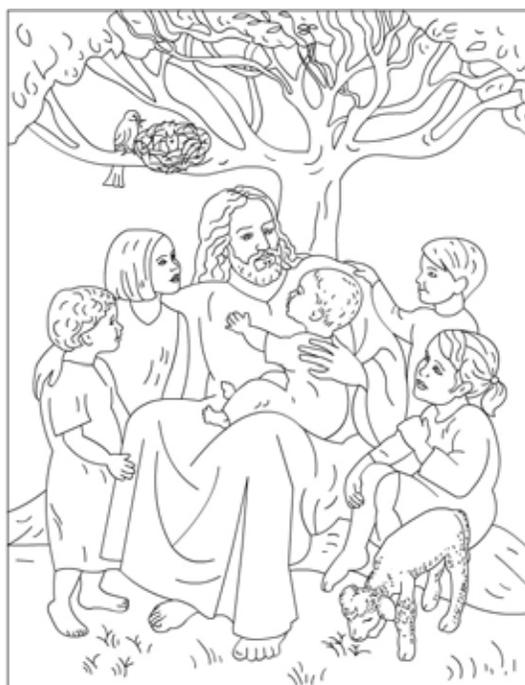
I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the Clergy of this City be requested to officiate in that Service. †

After this was done, Jesus recited portions of the book of Malachi so it would also be written down. “This had been done for the teaching of future generations,” Jesus said.

Jesus told them all the things which would come to the world until the time that He should return. This included prophecies about the restoration of Israel in the last days. There were many other things that Jesus told them; too many to write in the abridged record prepared by Mormon. Jesus also taught them some things they were forbidden to write down. These were left out to try our faith today. God wants to know if we will prepare ourselves and seek this knowledge by believing and obeying what he has given us.

Jesus spent time with the selected twelve disciples to teach them and prepare them

for the work ahead of them. Jesus made preparations for the disciples to come to him at the end of their



CC image © Nicole Florian via coloring-nicole.blogspot.com

Joy is the fruit of the settled conviction that Jesus Christ is raised from the dead.

— N. T. Wright

lives. For three of them, however, it was the true desire of their hearts to remain on earth preaching and teaching until Jesus came the second time. Jesus allowed them the desire of their hearts and they are still actively ministering the gospel until the Second Coming of Jesus the Messiah.

After he completed his work in Bountiful, he went up to heaven again. He said he was going to visit many other scattered groups from Israel and is now seated with his Father in heaven.

The Nephites responded very well to the visit of Jesus. Building on the things he taught them and guided by the disciples, they built a Zionic-style community that lasted for hundreds of years before they fell into sin again.

Read the full story in 3 Nephi 3:5-10; 3 Nephi 5; 3 Nephi 8:6-8; 3 Nephi 10:34-41; 3 Nephi 11:1-33; 3 Nephi 13:1-12, 17-23. †

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Persecution

Representing the forces of evil, Satan strives to deny entire people, groups and nations access to Jesus. It became clear in our interviews that the ultimate goal of the persecutors is always to deny people access to Jesus, and our interviews indicated that persecutors would do whatever was necessary to reach that goal.

Persecutors seek to deny hu-

man beings the two great spiritual opportunities: first, access to Jesus and, second, opportunity for witness. Choosing Jesus as Lord and Savior and then sharing His love and grace with others is the clearest way to stand against and oppose evil.

As strange (and as horrifying) as it sounds, we came to realize that believers could be unwittingly com-

plicit with the persecutors by simply refusing to share their faith. Just like persecution, the refusal to share the faith denies people access to Jesus. It was a startling thought to realize that the persecutor's use of violence to inhibit the faith and the believer's refusal to speak openly of Jesus yield the same result.

— Nik Ripken in his book,
The Insanity of Obedience,
page 28-29.

Save the Date!

The General Conference is scheduled for April 2-8 in Independence, Mo., USA.
Theme is "Getting Ready for His Marvelous Work"

On Sunday, April 2, from 3 pm to 5 pm, there will be an "all priesthood prayer service" at Saints Haven Restoration Branch (Sibley, Mo.)

Monday, April 3 (8:30 am), conference activities will begin in Independence, with

conference ending at 12:30 pm on Saturday, April 8.

For more information as it becomes available, see the 2017 Conference web page: <http://tinyurl.com/grfkhrt>.