

The Restoration

August 12, 2018 Sacrament Meeting Talk

By Bruce Wilcox

APPRECIATION

I appreciate the opportunity extended to me by Bishop Hawkins to share with you a gospel message prior to my moving from the ward.

I do so humbly, if full acknowledgement that, while physically I may be somewhat large in stature, but in matters spiritual, as to wisdom, as to people skills, self-discipline, ability to prioritize and complete tasks, and so many other facets of life, I am as a dwarf in a land of giants. I am so appreciative of the privilege I have had to worship with you each Sunday, to bask in the light of your testimonies, to draft in the wake of your righteousness, and, together with you, in such small ways as we are able, seek to contribute to the building up of the kingdom of God on the earth. I sincerely thank you for the love and support you have given to my family and to me, especially in light of the unusual and far-less-than-ideal circumstances of my life at this time.

I now ask that the Spirit of the Lord might attend us I as speak to the topic assigned to me by the Bishop.

INTRODUCTION

In the 29th chapter of the book of Isaiah, verses 9 through 14, we read the following:

9 Stay yourselves, and wonder;
cry ye out, and cry:
they are drunken, but not with wine;
they stagger, but not with strong drink.

10 For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep,
and hath closed your eyes:
the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.

11 And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed,
which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee:
and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed:

12 And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee:
and he saith, I am not learned.

13 ¶ Wherefore the Lord said,
Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and
with their lips do honour me,
but have removed their heart far from me, and
their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

14 Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people,
even a marvellous work and a wonder:
for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and
the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.

Reading these verses, we are reminded why Nephi wrote that to understand the words of Isaiah, one needs to both know “concerning the manner of prophesying among the Jews.” (2 Nephi 25:1) and be “filled with the spirit of prophecy” (2 Nephi 25:4).

But we who have lived to see the fulfillment of this prophecy -- we who recognize references to “sealed books” and “learned men” and to people who draw near to the Lord with their mouth but whose hearts are far from him (Joseph Smith – History 1:19) -- know that the “marvelous work and a wonder” prophesied of by Isaiah is the restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ in these the latter-days.

THE RESTORATION BEGINS

In February of 1829, the Lord revealed, “a marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men.” (D&C 4:1) And some 14 months later, on April 6, 1830, the marvelous work was officially begun as the restored church of Jesus Christ was “organized and established [under] the laws of our country” (D&C 20:1) in Fayette, Seneca County, New York. Those of you who were born prior to 1980 may recall that the reconstructed log home of Peter Whitmer where the church was organized 150 years previous was dedicated by president Spencer W. Kimball, as part of the church's annual general conference that year, and we were able to participate in that dedication by satellite.

The church that was organized on that day in 1830 was not just another group of individuals who decided of their own accord to form a church to gather and worship and preach according to their understanding of the revelations given to the primitive church. This church was established because some 10 years previous a young boy had “retired to the woods” (JS-H 1:14) adjacent to his family’s farm “to inquire of the Lord” so that he would “know which of all the sects was right” and “which [he] should join”. And, on that spring day in 1820, the most marvelous and wonderful vision conceivable occurred and that young boy, Joseph Smith, was visited by God the Father and His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph was instructed by them to not join any of the churches in existence at that time. And Joseph recorded, “many other things did he say unto me, which I cannot write at this time” (JS-H 1:20).

This Joseph, whose father's name was also Joseph (2 Nephi 3:15), was not a random lad to whom the Lord appeared. He was known and prophesied of thousands of years previous when Jacob prophesied to his son Joseph who had been carried captive into Egypt that there would be among his descendants a "seer" to whom God would "give power to bring forth" the writings of the descendants of Joseph (2 Nephi 3:11-12). Joseph Smith, like Abraham was "chosen before [he was] born" (Abraham 3:22) and like Jeremiah, was foreordained to be a "prophet unto the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5) "in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was" (TPJS, 365).

Over the course of the next 10 years, the Lord prepared and empowered Joseph to commence the marvelous work God had in mind for him to do.

In September of 1823, at age 17, Joseph was visited by a "messenger sent from the presence of God" whose "name was Moroni". Joseph was informed that God had a work for him to do and that Moroni had deposited, at a location that would be shown to Joseph, a book written upon gold plates which contained the "fullness of the everlasting Gospel". And in that same location were also the means by which the book could be translated (JS-H 1:33-34).

Four years later, in September of 1827, when Joseph was 21, the plates and the accompanying means for translation were delivered by Moroni to Joseph Smith.

The work of translation of the plates commenced in the spring of 1828 in Harmony, Pennsylvania. After 116 of the translated pages were stolen from Martin Harris, the work of translation was suspended for a season. But the translation resumed in 1829 with the majority of the translation done from April to June of that year.

In May of 1829, at age 23, Joseph received the Aaronic Priesthood under the hand of John the Baptist. Shortly thereafter, the ancient Apostles Peter, James, and John appeared to Joseph and Oliver Cowdery and conferred upon them the Melchizedek Priesthood.

In August of 1829, the typesetting of the Book of Mormon began. And the printing of the book was completed in March of 1830.

With completion of the translation of the Book of Mormon and having been given the priesthood keys and authority, the restored church of Christ could be then be duly established. In the preface to Section 20 of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, we read that Joseph Smith wrote that the Lord "pointed out to us the precise day upon which, according to His will and commandment, we should proceed to organize His Church once more here upon the earth." That day being exactly 1830 years since his coming in the flesh.

And on that day the marvelous work and a wonder officially began.

EVERY PERSON CAN KNOW THESE THINGS ARE TRUE

As members of this restored church, we assert that the Lord did call “upon [his] servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments” (D&C 1:17) and gave unto him “power to lay the foundation of this church, and to bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness”. We testify that the Lord has said that it is, “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth, with which I, the Lord, am well pleased, speaking unto the church collectively and not individually” (D&C 1:30)

The claims we make are fantastic. And either these claims are true, or they are not. There is no middle ground. Either Moroni, John the Baptist, Peter, James, and John, appeared to Joseph Smith or they did not. Either the Lord Jesus Christ commissioned the establishment of this church or He did not. Either Joseph Smith and his successors are true prophets of the Lord or they are not.

But we attest to the world that every person can know for themselves that these things are true. By the same means by which Peter knew that Jesus was not “John the Baptist, Elias, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets” but that he was “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:14-16), every sincere inquirer can “know the truth of [these] things” by the power of the Holy Ghost (Moroni 10:5). We testify that like Alma of old, we have fasted, and we have prayed and do “know of [ourselves] that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto [us] by his Holy Spirit” (Alma 5:45).

We do not say come, join this church because our pastors more accurately interpret the writings of the ancient apostles Peter, John, and Paul than do other churches. We say “come and see”. See that the Lord has restored His church and called modern apostles, modern-day Peters and modern-day Pauls. And though their names are Russell and Henry and Dallin and Melvyn and so forth, like their ancient counterparts, they are men who do not take this honor unto themselves but were called of God, as was Aaron (Hebrews 5:4). They are men “chosen” by Christ and “ordained” (John 15:16) to the office in which they serve and are “upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church” (D&C 107:22). They are men who speak as “they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost” (D&C 68:3) and whose words represent the “mind of the Lord” and the “will of the Lord” (D&C 68:4) for us in our day.

We invite all to ask God if these things are not true that you too may “know of their surety and truth, because of ... Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent” (Mosiah 5:12) will manifest unto you that they are. And when you gain that conviction, you too will see that this a marvelous work and you will want to embrace and participate in it.

BECAUSE OF THE RESTORATION

The restoration of the gospel and church of Jesus Christ gives us a multitude of blessings that we would be missing if it had not happened. Let me enumerate just a few of them.

Because of the restoration, we have in our hands both the stick of Judah (the Bible) and the stick of Joseph (the Book of Mormon). Not only do we have the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John but we have the 3rd Nephi account of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ on this continent. We can supplement the teachings of Peter, John, and Paul preserved in the Bible with the marvelous discourses and writings of Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, Benjamin, Abinadi, Alma, Amulek, Helaman, Samuel, Mormon, and Moroni and others. With the coordination of these revelations we have in our possession the true doctrine of Christ in a plain and precious form.

Because of the restoration of the church of Christ, we no longer have need to “run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord” (Amos 8:12). We have but to gather to the stakes of Zion (<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1977/04/come-let-israel-build-zion>) where we have leaders who have the authority and keys to administer the church and the ordinances of the gospel.

Because of the restoration, when our children arrive at the age of accountability, they can be baptized by one having authority under the direction of one having the keys to administer that sacred ordinance.

Because of the restoration, we can meet each week to participate in the ordinance of the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper which ordinance feeds our Spirits, comforts our souls, and keeps us more unspotted from the world (D&C 59).

Because of the restoration, we can partake of the ordinances of the House of the Lord and have the assurance that, if we will keep the covenants we make with our God, at a future day He will invite us to enter into His celestial kingdom and partake of the gift of Eternal Life, which gift is the greatest of all of the Gifts of God.

Because of the restoration, we thank God for the marvelous work that He is doing not only in His church but in our homes and in our lives.

FUTURE

I would like to conclude by directing a few remarks to those of you who are of my children's and my grandchildren's generation.

It will be the privilege of many of you to prepare for and participate in what, in my estimation, will be the most marvelous and wonderful event ever to transpire on this planet. For many of you will live to see that day when the "trumpet shall sound" (1 Cor. 15:52). And when it sounds, you will be among those who will go out "to meet the bridegroom" (D&C 133:10). And casting your eyes towards heaven, you will see "the sign of the Son of Man in heaven" and you will "see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory;" (Matthew 24:30) And, if you have oil in your lamps, if you have "taken the Holy Spirit for [your] guide" (D&C 45:57) , you will be among those who are "caught up to meet him" (D&C 88:96). You will observe that time when "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord" and "the government shall be upon his shoulder" (Isaiah 9:6) and "he shall reign for ever and ever."

But, for now, your task is to prepare for the great and dreadful day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5) -- which will be great for those who are prepared and dreadful for those who are not. The apostles of this church will instruct you how to prepare. Each six months, if you will open your mind and your heart to their words, they will lead you in the way of life and salvation.

For example, in our April general conference President Russell M. Nelson said the following: "Our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, will perform some of His mightiest works between now and when He comes again. We will see miraculous indications that God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, preside over this Church in majesty and glory. But in coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost." Included in the conference messages are instructions on how to obtain and maintain the constant influence of the Holy Ghost in our lives.

I bear my testimony that this church is the restored Church of Jesus Christ. I know that Jesus Christ stands at its' head and gives direction to His chosen apostles for our day.

The restoration of this church is the marvelous work and a wonder spoken of by Isaiah.

These things I know by the power of the Holy Ghost.

And I share that witness in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.