

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Rob Rolfe • 619 S. State, Lamoni, IA 50140 • 641-784-6030

Let The Fires Burn

One person told Lynda and I that we shouldn't go West this year because of all of the forest fires. We went, not because we weren't concerned about the fires and smoke, but because we believed that a real ministry could be performed. The closest we got to a fire was watching some smoke rise over the other side of a mountain range. Everywhere we went that had been on fire, the fire was now out, and the smoke gone.

My concern today is that for many Christians, the fire is also out of their lives. In numerous places in the Scriptures we find the promise that if we have faith, and are baptized of the water, we will, during what we call "confirmation," receive the Holy Ghost and fire. Perhaps you also are concerned about the fire in your life. Do you think your fire has been put out? If it has, what can you do about it?

The Apostle in I Thessalonians 5:19 says: "Quench not the Spirit." Considering the events of this summer, I have an image of spraying water on the fire and Holy Spirit in our lives. In a sense, we do just that, and then wonder why we don't have "the blessings, full and free." How do we spray water on the Holy Ghost? There are so many way. Let me list a couple.

1. We don't keep our bodies as a temple. We abuse our bodies with lack of sleep, poor food choices, poor physical habits, etc. and then we wonder why the Holy Spirit doesn't want to live there.

2. By harboring ungodly thoughts and emotion. This one is hard as well. We can repent, but too often the thoughts and emotions come back. Is God at fault for this? No, we are. Most often, we look at or point

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TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

Upheld By God's Spirit, Endure To The End

Rob Rolfe in charge introduced the speaker for the Communion message July 7 by saying, "For all of you who have said you wanted to see a miracle, you have a chance here this morning, because when our speaker stands up, I will just tell you, he's a miracle, and you are seeing one standing in front of you. I am not going to tell you his story, but I assure you that he stands in front of you by the power of Jesus Christ, and that's why he's here today."

After a few introductory remarks to individuals, Elder Jerry Slayton announced, he would like to start by reading from the scriptures concerning Lehi's dream. From the first Book of Nephi, chapter 2:62-69 he read, "I beheld a rod of iron; and it extended along the bank of the river, and led to the tree by which I stood. And I also beheld a straight and narrow path which came along by the rod of iron, even to the tree by which I stood; And it also led by the head of the fountain unto a large and spacious field as if it had been a world; And I saw numberless concourses of people, many of whom were pressing forward that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree by which I stood."

Skipping two verses where we learn that some people are lost in darkness along this path. "And it came to pass that I beheld others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree." He next read one verse from 1 Nephi 3:68 in which the angel is explaining Lehi's dream to Nephi. "And it came to pass that I beheld that the rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life; which waters are a representation of the love of God." Finally he said, "You have just heard this line twice." And he read from the Doctrine and Covenants - "That they may always have His Spirit to be with them."

God's Spirit Leads A Young Life

Brother Slayton said he was responding to Pastor Robert Rolfe's request that he share his testimony of how God's Spirit might have been with him. As he thought of one particular instance about which he wished to tell, he apologized to those who had heard

it before for the repetition then proceeded to say that as he looked back at his life he found, "There are a lot of places where I thought that the Lord's Spirit was affecting me and guiding me, and I didn't even know it. Have you ever felt that way as you look back? And what I would also like to say before I go any farther is that this is about me, but I don't want me to be in the center of this. I want the Lord to be in the center of this, because He is the one that brought this about. And so, if there is anything that is inspiring, I say, 'Praise the Lord!' And if there are things which are boring, it's my fault. I'm sorry!"

"So when Nephi says, 'Having been born of goodly parents, I don't know who my parents were. I was put up for adoption, and I was adopted by some church people. And I think back, where could I have been? You think about all of the stories that you hear about foster children and problems they have these days, or maybe not necessarily that. Maybe I could have been adopted into a good family, but not into a Latter Day Saint family. My parents were not particularly active in the church, but they sent me to Sunday School every Sunday. And I used to say, 'Well, how come I have to go if you don't have to go?' And they said, 'You go!' Looking back, I'm so glad for those experiences we used to have - I don't know if you know the quarterlies like from back in the fifties, but boy we really had some good quarterlies about the doctrine and history of the church and we really learned a lot. I had friends to go with. I lived in the area of the Stone Church, so I went there. I sang in the boy's choir. I sang in the youth choir, and I remind you, I couldn't read a note. It was great!"

"When I got into high school, a lot of my friends in Independence, were going to go to Graceland College. And, you know that was just something church people talked about - you want to go to Graceland. So I wanted to go, and my Mother said, 'No!' She had gone to the University of Kansas which was about fifty miles away from Independence. She said, 'You are going to go there.' Well, they were paying the bills, so I didn't have a choice. But, you know what? I'm looking back again. Graceland at that time did not have a German major. Most of you know that I am a German teacher. I could not have gone into German if I had gone to Graceland. When I got to KU, the first year I was there I was really taking pre-med classes, but they said, 'You ought to take some foreign language.' So I decided I would take German. I loved it! When I was ready to graduate, I felt, 'That's me'! That's languages. That's what the Lord has given me a talent to do. A lot of people meet their wife at Graceland. I met my wife at KU in the Liahona Fellowship, which some of you may have heard of."

When it was time to go to graduate school, Jerry and Gloria went to Houston, TX, where they didn't know a soul. But they were given a contact that turned out to be a church family living some two blocks from where Jerry was going to school. They gave them a tip as to where we should go to find an apartment, and they found one right away just down the street. They didn't have a car, but the family took them to church. "We had a great supportive congregation down there - just like you guys. So we had many wonderful experiences there."

The time came that Jerry was about to finish. "And when you finish," he reminded us, 'you have to take a whole lot of written and oral exams. And it's not fun. I did OK in the ones that I liked, but I didn't like modern literature, and I didn't pass in modern literature. And you only get one or two chances to try again or else you are done. And so I went to our congregation and I said, "Would you, please, pray for me because this is a very crucial part of my life. I

have put in almost five years, and is it going to be for nothing?" And they did pray for me. Many, many people prayed for me, and I passed, but I don't think it was just my doing.'

Directed in Service

"Another door opened just as I was finishing. I had never wanted to go any place else but Graceland College to teach. I didn't apply any place else. They had asked me something about it when I had just gotten my master's degree, and I just didn't want to quit there because I was afraid I wouldn't ever get to finish everything once I got working. Who knows what's going to happen? It turned out that the German teacher there went on leave. He wanted to work on his Ph.D. for two years. I got to go. They said, 'You can come for two years. When he comes back, that's it.' Against their will, he extended to three years, and that gave me a little more inside the door. When he finally did come back, I was able to stay and he did too, but we had to teach some English classes too. I finally realized my dream of going to Graceland, a little later than I thought."

"Probably the highlight - I don't know what can you say is the highlight if you look back on the years you have worked, but one of the neatest times was when I got to go work for the church in Germany for a year. I had some really interesting experiences, and it really made me appreciate the blessings I grew up with here. One of the hardest things was, that was in the days of Communism in the East, and we had a lot of people there. I wanted to go preach. That wasn't my personal wish. They asked me. They invited me to go preach, so I wanted to go. But I couldn't get a visa for it. I think it was because I was a church person. So I appreciate that here we can go wherever we want to go to church."

God's Hand Manifest Through A Battle With Cancer

"Let's fast forward ahead. In August of 1997 right out of the blue I was diagnosed with melanoma cancer, and it was stage four. Stage four is the worst. You can't get worse. That was scary. I think at that time I was administered to. It was the first of many administrations I have had, and less than a year later there was a CAT-scan done, and it showed that I had melanoma spots on my liver. My oncologist shook my hand as I walked out the door from that visit and he said, 'There is no cure for cancer of the liver.' And it was like, 'Good-bye!' I mean, it was kind of in that tone, and I don't think he expected to see much more of me."

"Well, months passed. Even some years started to pass. I was still here. They would do subsequent CAT scans and they saw that the spots had receded on the liver. Now, the oncologist said, 'They're still there. You just can't see them.' But at least, they weren't getting bigger. They weren't getting worse. I also had melanoma in three other organs, and yet, somehow, my oncologist says, my body has been able to work out some kind of a symbiosis - some kind of a co-existence, and it's kind of at a standstill right now, and it has been for a long time. I'm not saying we have any guarantees, but that's the way it seems to be right now,"

"Then I began having trouble with the side of my face, and I had several surgeries to remove the spots of melanoma. Finally, last July, there was a particularly bothersome spot. And Dr. Johnson, the surgeon here in Mount Ayr, didn't want to operate on it. He had done the other operations, but he didn't want to operate on this one because he said, 'If I operate, it's liable to bother your facial nerve. And if your facial nerve gets messed up, your face is going to go down like this (Jerry demonstrated), and your students won't be so happy to see you in the classroom all of the time.' So he said, 'Go to a specialist in Iowa City.'

"This specialist was the head of the department and had been rated

by US News and World Report as the best in the nation in otolaryngology. So I went to him. I thought, 'Oh, this guy. He's the best. He can help me. But he said, 'I don't want to operate either.' The same reason. Then he said, 'You should have radiation.' So he sent me back; and we went up to Des Moines every day for two weeks having the radiation. That was last July. He asked me to come back in a month; then he added, 'By the way, you only have a fifty-fifty chance that this will help.' I came back in a month. He measured it and said, 'There's no change.' And he added, 'You really shouldn't be too surprised, for there wasn't that much hope for you in that.'

"Then I went back to my regular oncologist, and he said, 'If you don't do anything - if you don't have an operation it's liable to grow and cause that nerve problem anyway.' So what could I do? If I didn't do it, it could cause it. If I had the operation it could cause it. So it was like a catch 22.

Many people were praying for me. I went back to the oncologist in October. He measured it and said, 'No change.' That's when he said he wanted to write a letter to this man in Iowa City and send me back to him again. So he did, but I was really concerned about this now. Oh, by the way, the oncologist said also that if the radiation would have worked, it would have started even during the radiation itself. You would have seen a little bit of reduction. That was July. Here we are in October, and there is no change. In November - I would keep feeling the tumor about every day. I wanted to see how much bigger it was getting. In November I was feeling it, and it seemed like it was getting a little smaller. I asked Gloria and she said she thought it was getting a little smaller, too. "I went back to the oncologist in December, and it was gone! It was all gone! And he didn't have an explanation, but I did. I said to him, 'There have been prayer groups - there have been many people praying for me, and I believe it's the Lord. I believe the Lord took it away. The oncologist didn't have any better answer. He didn't contradict me.

The Testimony Is Shared

"Later that month I had to go to a lung specialist because I had asthma and because I had reflux. My oncologist sent him a letter explaining all of my history. At the end of this letter he was talking about this tumor that had gone away and he said, 'The patient ascribes the disappearance of this tumor to the effect of a prayer group and the fact that he was healed by the prayers of these people'. Then he added, 'And that's as good an explanation as any.' After reading the letter, the lung doctor went on with his examination, and when I left his office he said, 'Don't forget the power of prayer.' And, by the way, my oncologist had said earlier, 'Could you give me the number of this prayer group?'

"During the past six months I have had opportunity to share this testimony with doctors and nurses from Mount Ayr to Des Moines to Iowa City. (I did go there again.) I had an especially moving experience in April with an intern in Iowa City who was quizzing me about my medical history. It stated in the record that she had that I had an inoperable tumor near my ear. Now that it was gone, she wanted to know why. I said to her, 'You need to know first that I am a religious person.' She responded, 'As I am.' I then related to her the details of the prayers of so many people and the resulting healing by the Lord. When I finished she said, 'That's awesome! It makes me want to cry.'

"Also in April, I visited the radiologist whose treatment on my tumor had failed. He, too, wanted to know why it was now gone. I was concerned that he might be offended when I told him that it was

not because of his treatment. But after he heard my testimony, he, too, was moved and used the same expression of the Iowa City intern, 'That's awesome!'

"I have also had the opportunity to share this experience with some faculty, staff and administration at Graceland. One member of the administration, upon hearing it, responded, 'There aren't many who would say that', meaning attribute the tumor's disappearance to the Lord's healing power. It's really amazing how many opportunities we get to share with others!

Blessed To Climb The Pyramids

"I want to share one other thing with you, not in relation to my cancer but in relation to the Book of Mormon trip to Mexico which I was able to go on. Because I had asthma, I was having a lot of trouble being out of breath. I don't know if you are familiar with that Book of Mormon trip's itinerary, but there were a lot of pyramids we went to see. You know, the expectation is, you want to climb them. You don't want to just sit down there and look up. And then it was just a strenuous trip. We were doing stuff all of the time. And I was really concerned that I wouldn't be able to go because of my problem. And so I was administered to not very long before the trip began, and I decided, 'I'm going to go, no matter what. OK, so I don't go up to the top of the pyramids. Fine. I'll stand at the bottom.' But I was able to go up to the top of the pyramids! I didn't run up, but I got up there! Gerry Bolingbroke made a video, and he has the proof. So just ask Gerry.

"One of the most unforgettable experiences of my trip was the occasion amidst the ruins of the ancient city of Yaxchilon when I was again administered to. This experience was especially moving because many believe Yaxchilon to be the Book of Mormon city of Zarahemla.

Endure To The End - How?

"Finally, I want to say, it may not be so spectacular, but I believe I have had a composite blessing. In August it will be five years since I was first diagnosed with this stage four melanoma, and here I am! And I don't say it to brag. I don't say it because I am so great. I don't know why I am still here, but I do believe I have had a blessing. I have no explanation for it except that the Lord has preserved me.

"I saw on C-Span Cable a broadcast called 'Book History'. They interview authors and they talk about books the authors wrote. I was watching a couple of weeks ago when there was a lady that had written a book about the Gulf War syndrome. She was studying soldiers that came back from the Gulf War back in 1991. Many of these soldiers developed this Gulf War syndrome. Some of them felt like they had flu all the time. Are you familiar with Lou Gherig's disease? With Lou Gherig's Disease, as it progresses, you lose all of your muscle control. You can't talk. You can't do anything. Findings indicated that an above average number of veterans developed that illness. They interviewed a couple of those people. One guy had been an air force pilot, and, he said, 'Well, you know, I started to ask, Why me? Why do I have to have this debilitating disease, and I can't do anything?' Then he says he thought, 'How come I didn't ask, Why me? when I was a great athlete in High school? How come I didn't ask, Why me? when I passed all of the tests to be a pilot, and I was flying here and there, and I was in wonderful shape? Why? Why didn't I say, Why me? then?' We always wait until there's some problem. And he said that he trained under an old pilot who had flown in the Korean War, and this pilot had given him some advice. He said, 'No matter how bad it looks, never give up. 'It doesn't matter if you are up in your plane

and here come some bandits - some enemy pilots - at six o'clock, they are underneath you and you are vulnerable. Don't give up! Maybe their guns will fail. Maybe their plane will malfunction. Don't give up!' And isn't this kind of what the Lord is asking of us - not to give up?

"I have one last scripture I want to share with you. This is from Mark, 13:6-13. This is when Jesus had just talked to His Disciples about the destruction of the temple. 'And Jesus left them and went upon the Mount of Olives. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the Disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be which Thou has said, concerning the destruction of the temple, and the Jews? And what is the sign of thy coming, and the end of the world, (or the destruction of the wicked, which is the end of the world?) And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you, for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another; and many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold; but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.'

"Endure until the end. Don't give up. How do we do that? Doesn't the scripture I read at the beginning of my remarks, telling of Lehi's dream of the rod of iron and of Nephi's explanation of the rod of iron meaning the word of God, tie in with the admonition of Jesus to endure to the end? We are able to endure by holding fast to God's word. We just partook of the emblems today. I just remind you again of the part of the prayers, 'that we may have His Spirit to be with us'. And I feel like the only way that I have been able to endure is that the Lord's Spirit has been with me, and I thank Him so much for that. And I thank all of you for your prayers and support."

It's Your Choice -- Make It Count

Opening the service, Steven Smith reported briefly on the Junior High Camp from which he had just returned. "The Lord led the campers to rely on prayer", he reported, and then told how, at the campfire director's suggestion, they had prayed for two carloads of individuals who came to the camp lake and were cursing "significantly" during the campfire. By the time the second camper started to pray, they heard the first car squealed out. Later on the other car left, and it was quiet the rest of the camp. "No one else came back to that area to fish or to curse."

When the heat index was predicted to get up to 112, as a camp, they prayed for the Lord to cool it down; and "the day that a heat index of 112 was predicted, a small wind started up, came right across the lake, ... decreased the heat index by about 20 degrees and made it tolerable for the campers."

"Individuals who were injured or sick were administered to and were healed. The campers had an opportunity to walk and talk with the angels and to be ministered to by them. I've never seen so many Junior Highs learn about fasting, talk about fasting and work with fasting. It was interesting to watch them experiment with that as well. It was a very good camp!"

The Sermon

For the scripture setting of his sermon, Elder Norman Nelson read excerpts from Doctrine and Covenants 1:3-4 - "Wherefore the voice of the Lord is unto the ends of the earth, that all that will hear may hear. ... And the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the apostles and prophets, shall be cut off from among the people; for they have strayed from mine ordinances, and have broken mine everlasting covenant; they seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great which shall fall.

"Wherefore, I, the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant, Joseph Smith, Jr., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments, and also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world; and all this that it might be fulfilled, which was written by the prophets, the weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, that man should not counsel his fellowman, neither trust in the arm of flesh, but that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even of the Savior of the world ..."

"We were talking this morning about the power given to certain people for certain reasons. The only authority that is given to us is the authority of asking the Lord to give us the Holy Ghost to guide our efforts. If you remember, in the Doctrine and Covenants, it says that you shall ask for that authority when you are to speak, and if you are not given that authority, you shall not teach. Now, it's not just the person up here that has to have that Holy Ghost. If you don't have it, it doesn't do any good at all for me to have it from here. Because, if you don't have the Holy Ghost with you teaching you, my words are worthless to you; and any words that the Lord could speak would also be worthless to you, because you wouldn't hear it. So unless you have asked and have received that gift of the Holy Ghost, nothing is going to happen.

"Right now, we are pretty proud persons, aren't we? We think of ourselves as pretty good guys. Remember, every one of us is on probation. When you look at a person who is on probation, you think, 'He's supposed to be in jail,' but he's not in jail. He is on probation. He's out proving whether he can do things right in the community. And every one of us is on that same probation. We are out here proving whether we can listen to the Spirit of God or not. I've just read to you that the Lord has given certain things and scriptures to us as a people to use if we will listen. You see, He made you. He created you to be a certain kind of person. And He made you a special person. You're not like anybody else. There is nobody else in the whole world like you. You are a very special being, and you are supposed to fill a special part in the Kingdom of God - in His body - but it is only if you choose to do that.

"When Christ was born, He was innocent, and He chose to listen to that Spirit of God that came to Him and taught Him. When you were born, you were innocent and it was up to you to choose what you would listen to and what you would learn from. You were created in the image of God. You were created with a certain ability to choose, but the choice is always yours.

"Why did God create you? Why did God create this world? It's the nature of God to want companionship, just like you want companionship and friendship. But God is holy, and He can only be

with those who choose to be holy and like Him. And so, He has instituted all of these laws and all of these principles He had given us to allow us to become like Him. We talk about this as light, light and truth. If you choose light and truth very day, then His Spirit can be with you and lead you to be the person you ought to be - the person He wants you to be. But, if you choose darkness and other than the light of truth, you can be that way; but you can't be that way and be what He wants you to be - what He planned for you to be.

"All things have their likeness; and all things are created and made to bear record of me; both things which are temporal and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, ... and things which are in the earth beneath, and which are under the earth, all things bear record of me." (Genesis 6:66). All you have to do is look around you at the earth, the people and everything that is, and you can see God. At the same time, you can look around you and see yourself and choose to say, 'I am the center of all this and I am the reason for all of it, and then you won't know anything. You won't see God. You won't see the beauty. You won't see the relationship of yourself to other people. You will try to make everything come in on yourself, and it does. And this is a black hole that continues to draw things in until it crushes everything within you. It's your choice! If you choose light and intelligence, you can have it. It's an everyday choice, and you are on probation, whether you are going to choose that or not.

God's Plan

"You see, the plan is that if you will choose correctly, you can be a son of God. You can become a son of God if you will choose to be that. If you will choose Him as your Father and do the things He asks you to do, you can become. You know, when you go to school, the teachers try to teach you things. If you will listen and try to learn, over a long period of time, you can gradually learn the things they are trying to teach you. But if you merely sit in class and go to sleep, don't read the books - don't try, you don't learn what they want you to learn. So you don't become the expert or the knowledgeable person in that field. Now, the Lord has given you all kinds of books. You have the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants - you have lots of other good books, but if we don't read them, they don't mean anything to us. If we don't listen to the lessons He gives us each day, we can't become what He wants us to be. So you can become an intelligent being who honors the Lord - who becomes a mighty, very important person in this Kingdom of God, or you can choose to be something else; for the choice is yours every day. There's no other way.

"You see, there is a difference in what the two powers are trying to teach us. One is saying, 'I'm important. Nothing else matters. I will get what's mine and what I want.' And that's what's happening in our world today, isn't it? All the corporate junk, all the lies, all the deceits, and our civilization is suffering badly because of that particular frame of mind that says, 'I'm important. Nothing else matters. If I get my will, let everybody else do whatever happens. It doesn't really matter that people are suffering, dying, are hungry and aren't being fed or are being given drugs that destroy their very beings, their very souls.' This is the mind of a person who has listened to Satan. 'I am the important being. Nothing else matters.' "God sent His son into the world to teach us what it could be like. Christ didn't have a big house, a big home or anything else, but He listened to the Spirit of God and became the being that He is. You don't have to have a car or a house or anything else. If you will listen to the Spirit of God, you can become exactly the person He wants you to be. You were given your agency because there is no other

way that you can choose to be like Him. There is no other way you can become intelligent. Intelligence was not created - cannot be created. You have to choose to become an intelligent being. Intelligence is the light of truth. It's the light of truth. Now, I don't think there is any way that you and I can ever learn everything we need to become like God, His son or daughter. I don't think we can ever do that, but if we don't listen, He can't teach us. If we don't try to be His person, He cannot teach us. It's only if we try and listen and learn and study and work and choose that above all else. That's the only way God can teach us to be what He wants us to be. So it's your choice. You're on probation. What will we choose to be?

God's Great Desire

"The Lord God spoke unto Moses saying, The heavens they are many and they cannot be numbered unto man, but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine; and as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof, even so shall another come. And there is no end of My works, neither to my words; for this is my work and my glory, to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." (D&C 22:23). He's trying to create souls that are willing to learn enough to be with Him. What do you think it would be like to be with the Lord, trying to do what He said when you had rejected everything that He had ever told you? If you have never listened when you can hear His voice, how can you help Him control the universe? Some things have to be done His way. He knows how to control the universe. He made the stars, the heavens. He made all mankind, and He knows how to take care of it all. If we are to be co-workers with Him, we have to listen and try to learn. It's just like when you go to school, if you want to be an intelligent being that is able to know a subject, you have to try to learn. Maybe some people can soak it in without that, but very few. Our job is to learn by listening, by studying and by being willing to do what it takes to be His people.

"From the third Book of Nephi, fifth chapter, verse 32 - 'Behold, verily, verily I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine. And this is my doctrine, and it is the true doctrine which the Father hath given to me; and I bear record of the Father and the Father beareth record of me and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me, and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent, believe in me; and whoso believeth in me and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the Kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me and is not baptized shall be damned. Verily, verily, I say unto you that this is my doctrine; and I bear record from the Father; and whoso believeth in me, believeth in the Father also; ..."

"We have all made bad choices, and this scripture is saying, 'My doctrine is, believe in Me. Try to remember Me. Try to study and find out. Try to listen to Me. Repent. Change your ways from what you have been - making yourself the center. Make God the center of your universe. Study and pray, and then I will help you. If you don't do this, I can't help you. If you don't do this - if you don't repent - if you don't study and pray, I cannot help you! This is My doctrine.

God's Plumb Line

Amos 7:7-8 describes the vision of the prophet in which he sees the Lord God standing upon a wall that has been built plumb (straight) holding a plumb line in His hand. Amos had asked the Lord how Jacob, small as he was, would ever arise. God answered

him by saying Jacob must repent of his wickedness or he would be destroyed. Now He asked Amos what he saw. When he replied, “a plumb line”, the Lord explained that He would set a plumb line in the midst of His people, Israel, and not again pass by them anymore. Israel would suffer greatly if she did not repent.

After reading the scripture, Priest Gordon Winkler began his sermon, “All of us compare ourselves favorably with someone else - maybe not consciously or with bad feelings, but we do. We all think of someone whom we consider to be less mature than we are, less competent, less able to do things that we can do. That person is a great comfort to us because he or she enables us to keep our self-image intact by saying, ‘Well, at least I’m not like so and so.’ Just remember that person could be comparing themselves to us also. The problem with comparing ourselves to others is that we are using the wrong measuring stick!

“A little boy once came up to his mother one morning and said to her, ‘Mother, guess what. I’m eight feet, four inches tall!’ His mother, greatly surprised, inquired into the matter and discovered that he was using a six - inch ruler to measure with instead of a ‘foot’. The boy was actually only a few inches over four feet tall. This is exactly what we do when we measure ourselves by one another, an imperfect prototype rather than by the standard of the Word of God.

“This morning I am asking us to think about our standard of spirituality, our standard of holiness. As individuals, do we compare ourselves to those whom we consider to be less righteous than we are? As a church, do we compare our ministry with that of other churches? If we are making such mistaken comparisons, then hopefully this morning we will discover the true standard by which God compares us.

“I came up with the topic out of Amos as a result of determining that I really need to read more and study more. There is that whole list of books at the end of the Old Testament that I really didn’t pay a lot of attention to in past years, so I thought, for a couple of reasons, I would start there. One, I didn’t have much experience and knowledge in those books and, two, they are very short and I thought I could show a sense of accomplishment by getting through them. So, I began by reading Amos.

Who Was Amos?

“Maybe we should begin with a little introduction and review of Amos. (Maybe you are more knowledgeable about Amos than I was.) In the first verse of chapter 1, Amos introduces himself. ‘The words of Amos, who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah, he king of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.’ Did that tell you a whole lot? To give you a perspective of time, Uzziah the king of Judah reigned from about 790-739 BC. And Jeroboam the Second ruled in Israel from about 793-753 BC. They can record a large earthquake that occurred in Samaria around 760 BC, so that would put Amos somewhere around 762 BC. He had been a contemporary with Hosea and some of those other prophets there. You can gather from that opening verse that this is a time of the divided kingdom. Judah was to the south and Israel to the north. Amos lived in the town of Tekoa, which was approximately 12 miles south of Jerusalem. So he lived in the southern kingdom of Judah, and he earned his living as a herdsman or a shepherd. Verse 14 says he also gathered sycamore fruit. We have sycamore trees in the North American continent, but that’s a different kind of tree. A sycamore tree as being referenced here was something like a fig tree. It had a little yellow fruit on it.

So he was a gatherer of sycamore fruit.

“Although he was a native of Judah, he prophesied in Israel. Amos, the book, is contained in the collection at the end of the Old Testament commonly referred to as the Minor Prophets, not because of his place in history or the importance of his writings but because he didn’t write as much as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel or Daniel. So what did Amos write about?

Amos Sees God Holding A Plumb Line

“Amos prophesies about the indictment of Judah and Israel and neighboring nations; but mostly about Israel’s neglecting the worship of their God. Rich merchants had oppressed the poor and worshipped the pagan idols that Jeroboam One had introduced to the nation. They indulged in extravagant luxury. So God brought Amos into the situation to warn the Israelites of God’s anger and of His judgments to come.

“In that scripture that I read, Amos 7:7&8, Amos saw the Lord standing on a wall. The wall was not identified, but we can assume that the wall was one of those around Israel’s capital city of Samaria. The wall symbolizes Israel as a nation, so Amos tells us that this wall had been made with a plumb line -- or it had been made true to plumb. In other words, the wall had been built straight. The wall was built properly. It stood straight and didn’t lean or sag in any direction. Symbolically, this means that Israel had been rightly and correctly established as a nation. The Lord had given His people the purest ordinances and statutes and regulations for the church. Everything was in holy order. Everything was directed to its proper goal, which was the glory of God. In the vision, Amos saw the Lord at the wall and He had a plumb line in his hand. What is a plumb line?

“A plumb line is simply a string with a weight fastened to one end. When the string was held up to the wall, the weight caused it to hang in an absolutely vertical position. Some walls built back then were built with little or no mortar and would slowly shift over time and settle until they became out of line and in need of repair. If left to stand, walls badly out of plumb are unsafe and dangerous - a threat to collapse. They, therefore, had to be demolished or rebuilt.” Gordon had a plumb line in his pocket which he attached to the ceiling saying, “It will hang straight, and if you were to look down this line, from this side, you could tell if things past it were straight. People use plumb lines rarely these days because we have different ways of surveying, but a plumb line is still a very effective way to make sure things are straight.

“The Lord said to Amos, ‘Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel.’ Amos knew what this meant. Just as a wall was built with a plumb line and later checked with a plumb line, so the Lord built and was now checking on Israel with a plumb line. The plumb line, or the divine standard, can represent only one thing, God’s law. The Lord had arrived on the scene with a plumb in His hand, and He was planning to check Israel against the plumb line of His law. Would He find anything wrong with the wall? Would Israel measure up? Amos knew the answer all too well. He knew the lack of justice and righteousness in Israel. He knew that Israel’s worship was all show and not at all heartfelt. Israel had been built on a foundation of God’s law, but she had allowed the dirt and the filth of the world to push her over and topple her down the slippery slope of sin.

How Is Our Plumb?

“What would happen if the Lord were to visit you and me with a plumb line in His hand. Are you and I living up to our calling to serve the Lord all of our life? Are you and I living up to what we are

supposed to be - the salt of the earth and a city set on a hill? Could it be that we, too, need to be pulled down? How does the church measure up to the Lord's plumb line? When the Lord checks us out, will He find little or a great deal of love amongst us? Will He find a people who care and seek to establish His Kingdom?

"When the Lord examines us, will He find selfishness and greed? Will He find materialism, worldliness, jealousy, lust, quarreling? Or will He find a church filled with passion for the Lord and the things of the Lord. 'Behold', says the Lord, 'I am setting a plumb line in the midst of My people.' There is no use hoping He will forget to look in some nook and cranny of our lives, our marriages, our homes, or our church. There is no use hoping that something might escape His attention. Everything will be checked very carefully against the plumb line of His perfect law. Our lives will be measured against God's standards.

"At our past reunion, Neil Simmons really brought that message home in his sermon. He emphasized that we are in God's world. We are under His rules. Things are set in His order, and no matter how we try to manipulate, rationalize or change that, we can't! We are still going to be held to God's standard.

"In verse 9 of Amos's prophecy, it says, 'The high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste. I will rise with the sword against the house of Jeroboam.' According to Amos, desolation will fall upon the religious structures of Israel after God checks them against the plumb line of His law. 'High places and 'sanctuaries' include the religious sites of the nation. The high place was an altar on the hill in the open country. Many had been there continuously since the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They were the official religious centers of the Northern Kingdom established by King Jeroboam at Bethel and Dan. These will all be destroyed after the Lord sets up His plumb line.

"When we turn to Amos, Chapter 5, we see that God not only had no use for the Israelite's religious centers of worship, but He has no use for Israel's religious practices, either. When measured against their plumb line, they, too, are found lacking. The Lord said in Amos 5:21-24, 'I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your sacred assemblies. Though you offer me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings. Take away from me the noise of your songs, for I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments. But let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream.' God had no use for Israel's religion because, as we have already said, it was all show and had not been heart felt.

"God has set His plumb line in our midst today. He has shown us His standard of excellence. The standard of excellence by which God measures us is by His son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the standard by which we will be judged. He is the Word of God, according to John 1:14, revealing that He is the law. Jesus told us, 'I have not come to destroy the law or the prophets but to fulfill the law'.(Matthew 5:19). What God has done for Israel in the Old Testament, He also does for the church today. He has given us His standard to live by. What is described in Amos in his vision as a plumb line is referred to in later writings of the New Testament, the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants as, 'Strait is the gate and narrow the way.'

Scriptures That Verify Our Plumb

"Let me share with you scriptures from the New Testament, the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants, and you decide for yourselves if Amos' vision of the plumb line isn't still true and the same admonition found throughout God's body of holy scrip-

ture. I will read selected portions of Matthew 7:16-33. 'Then Jesus answered and said unto His disciples, Thus shall ye say unto them,' (So Jesus is telling His disciples what to say to the people.) ... 'Repent, therefore, and enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. And, again, beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing; but inwardly they are ravening wolves. ... For the day soon cometh that men shall come before me to judgment, to be judged according to their works. And many will say unto me, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name; and in thy name cast out devils; and in thy name done many wonderful works. And then will I say, Ye never knew me. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.'

"And from Luke 13:23 'And there said one unto him, Lord, are there few only that be saved? and he answered them and said, Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for I say unto you, Many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able; for the Lord will not always strive with man. Therefore when once the Lord of the kingdom is risen up, and hath shut the door of the kingdom, then ye shall stand without, and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us. But the Lord shall answer and say unto you, I will not receive you, for ye know not from whence ye are.' Does that sound like a plumb line to you? The same one that is being talked about in Amos?

"Let's read a few scriptures from the Book of Mormon. Let's start with Second Nephi 13:11. Again I'm going to read a few selected verses from here. 'And again he showed to the children of men the straightness of the path and the narrowness of the gate by which they should enter, he having set the example before them; and he said to the children of men, Follow thou me. ... Then are you in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life? Ye have entered in at the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and of the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son to the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye enter in by the way, ye shall receive. Now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask, Is this all done? Behold I say to you, No, for you have not come this far save it were by the word of Christ, with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save; Wherefore, you must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and all men. Wherefore, if you press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life. Now behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is no other way, nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. Behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God without end. Amen.

"Let's go on to Second Nephi 15:10, and I read this because it brings back to memory Norman's sermon from last Sunday, because Norman brought to our attention that we are all on probation. 'Behold, for none of these can I hope, except they shall be reconciled to Christ and enter into the narrow gate, and walk in the straight path, which leads to life, and continue in the path until the end of the day of our probation.' Does that not sound like a plumb line to you?

"And from the Doctrine and Covenants 2:1 - 'The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught, for God doth not walk in crooked paths;

neither doth he turn to the right nor to the left; neither doth he vary from that which he has said; therefore his paths are straight and his course is one eternal round.’

“God’s paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round!” Gordon repeated, then added, “A plumb line is absolutely vertical. God’s plumb line is His laws, His expectations, His example of His Son Jesus Christ, and it’s just what was prophesied by Amos, they are still straight. They haven’t changed. And if you feel out of line today, repent and be received into God’s tender mercy and His loving care that at the time of our judgment, we might be found straight as God’s plumb line.”

The Importance of the Restoration

Elder Gerald Bolingbroke presented the message for Sunday, July 28. He began by reading John 13:1- 3.

Brother Bolingbroke expressed to the congregation that he has always been curious about the dates for organizing the church and the time when Joseph Smith, Jr., got the golden plates. His interest was peaked when he read Verneil Simmons book *The Day Christ Died*. For centuries most Christians have celebrated Christ’s resurrection on a Sunday, This practice was chosen by the Roman Catholic church. As a church, we have also accepted the same authority for the date of our Savior’s death. We call that day Good Friday. We also celebrate Christ’s birthday on December 25 because the Catholic Church imposed that date, based on a popular pagan festival enjoyed in Rome.

Using the Book of Mormon we can get more information for determining the dates for both his birth and his death. Christ was not born in December. The most probable date would be the first week of April.

The account in III Nephi records not only when he was born, but how old he was when he died. The Nephites changed their calendar three times. The third time was when the sign of Christ’s birth was given. They began their calendar starting with his birth. The count continued to the end of the thirty third year, which would mean this was Jesus’s thirty third birthday. The sign for his crucifixion came four days later. According to the Jewish calendar, the first month of the year is called Nisan. It coincides with April of our calendar. This tells us that his age and the month of his birth had to be in the spring, not in December.

It is also important to understand the Apostle Paul’s reference to Christ as the Passover Lamb. In I Corinthians 5:7 we read, “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.” We need to read the Passover story as found in Exodus 12:1-29. In this account the Lamb to be sacrificed was to be a yearling male without blemish. It was to be chosen on the tenth day, kept apart from the flock until the fourteenth day of the month, and then killed in the evening. In Jesus’s time the lambs were taken to the Temple between three and five in the afternoon of the fourteenth day, the first month (Nisan) . They had to be killed without a bone broken, the meat roasted, and the Passover meal eaten later that night during the early hours of the fifteenth day of Nisan. The people were then to take the blood and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper doorpost of the house in which they would eat the lamb. They were to eat the lamb that night. They roasted it with fire and used unleavened bread

and bitter herbs. They were not to let anything remain but were to burn that which they did not eat. They were told this was the Lord’s passover when the Lord should pass through the land killing all the first born of Egypt if they did not have the lamb’s blood on the doorposts. He told them they should keep this as a memorial from generation to generation.

Nisan 14 was known as the Day of Preparation for the Passover, as recorded in John 19:14, “And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour; and he saith unto Jesus, Behold your King!” This day of preparation was one of the housewives greatest tasks. She had to remove all leaven from her household. The seven days immediately following the Passover were celebrated as the feast of Unleavened Bread.

All the daylight hours of the Passover were counted a holy day wherein no unnecessary work could be done. It was regarded as a Sabbath, even though it could occur on any day of the week. For Christ to fulfill the symbolism of the paschal lamb, the days before the crucifixion would have to follow the pattern of the paschal lamb.

We can easily be confused in counting days, due to the Hebrew method of starting each new day at sunset, rather than midnight, as is our custom. Let us begin with John’s reference to Jesus’s arrival in Bethany the week before the passover day. Jesus came to the home of the family he loved, that of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. He had been preaching near Jericho and could not have made the long walk from there on the Sabbath, so we know he must have reached Bethany on Friday before sunset. John tells us it was six days before the Passover (John 12-1-2). “Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper and Martha served; but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.”

On that evening Martha prepared a supper, and other friends came from Jerusalem to visit. If Mormon’s account is correct, this was the Lord’s birthday. Only John reports this small event, but we should remember that he and Matthew were eyewitnesses to all the events of that week. Mark’s and Luke’s gospels were probably written many years later from the memories supplied by Peter and Paul.

We know that Jesus’s entry into Jerusalem came on the first day of the week, which today we call Palm Sunday. The daylight hours of Nisan 10. The multitude had heard Jesus was coming and went to meet him with shouts of “Hosanna to the Son of David”, Matthew 21-9. The shouts of acclamation might symbolize the people choosing Jesus as their paschal lamb.

Jesus continued to fulfill the symbolism of being the paschal lamb by spending his days in Jerusalem and his nights in Bethany, nearby. Both Matthew and Mark record details of those days. Jesus went to the Temple where he threw out the money changers. The high priest and his followers were busily plotting ways to have Jesus killed before the feast day. Judas went to the chief priests, made his offer to betray the Lord, and was promised thirty pieces of silver. It was still two days before the passover, Mark 14:1-2, “After two days was the passover, and the feast of unleavened bread. And the chief priests, and the scribes, sought how they might take Jesus by craft, and put him to death”. On our calendar it would have been a Wednesday.

The day of preparation for the Passover began at sunset on Nisan 14. It was during these early evening hours that Jesus ate the “Last Supper” with his disciples. It couldn’t have been the Passover feast. The confusion in the religious world comes from

the use of the word Passover in connection with the Last Supper by three of the gospel writers. However, John's gospel is more complete in describing the Last Supper, and of the four gospels, it should be considered the most accurate. He does not call this the Passover meal, but rather starts his account by saying it preceded the Passover meal. (John 13:1) "Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." In verse 2 he refers to the meal as a simple supper, not a feast in which the paschal lamb and bitter herbs would be spread before them.

After the Last Supper was ended they went to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus was betrayed by Judas. John records in John 18: 28, "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgement; and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they be defiled; but that they might eat the passover". John tells us that Jesus burial must be accomplished by sunset the day he died, because the coming Sabbath was a high day. This can be found in John 19:31. The Passover was still to be celebrated that Thursday evening after six o'clock P.M. on the beginning of Nisan 15, the end of the day of preparation.

For Jesus to fulfill the symbolism of the Passover Lamb, He had to die the same afternoon and at the same hour the paschal lambs were taken to the Temple to be slaughtered. Also, He had to die without any bones being broken, although this was most unusual at a crucifixion. He was nailed to the cross at the sixth hour (noon). All four gospels agree that his life ended at the ninth hour, three o'clock P.M. A Thursday crucifixion satisfies the three days required by the Nephite record and fits much better with the New Testament gospels.

To further understand the connection between the dates of Christ's birth and death with the restoration, Brother Bolingbroke gave us more information. A new covenant went into force upon the death of Christ -- the Mosaic Covenant was fulfilled or at an end. We now know that Christ died in the spring. The passover begins at the first new moon of the first month of the year. If Jesus died on April 6, 30 A.D. then there is a divine purpose in the commandment received by Joseph Smith, Jr., to organize the Church with the fullness of the gospel on April 6, nineteen centuries later. By using an astronomy computer program, Brother Bolingbroke was able to find that a new moon occurred on April 6, 30 A.D., and "Christianity Today" March 29, 1974, included an article by Prof. Roger Musk titled "The Day He Died." Prof. Musk came up with the same date.

Some other dates which are helpful in understanding how important the Restoration gospel is were included in the latter part of Brother Bolingbroke's sermon.

We know Christ continued for some forty days ministering to his apostles in Jerusalem, following his resurrection. He appeared to the Nephites in the Land Bountiful after his resurrection and ascension into heaven, before the end of his 34th year. During the three days of total darkness upon this continent, the Nephites heard a voice from heaven speaking to them, calling them to repentance. The voice told them that blood sacrifices and burnt offerings were done away and were no longer acceptable. Instead the people were told to offer a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

As good Israelites, the Nephites still kept the Law of Moses, even after they knew Christ would come to fulfill it. They were still honoring the feast days of Israel. The first autumn feast day is the Feast of Trumpets, Rosh Hashanah, celebrated on the first day of the

month of Tishri. Like the Passover, it is determined by the first sighting of the new moon and is a floating date in our solar calendar. This feast day varies in its occurrence from mid September through mid October.

A multitude of some 2,500 people had gathered about the Temple in the Land Bountiful when Christ descended from heaven and appeared unto them. Surely Nephi and other leaders of the church were worrying about how to conduct the service for the feast day, since the voice from heaven had already told them that burnt offerings were now unacceptable. We have a clue to the date of Christ's visitation. Was it a coincidence that Joseph Smith, Jr., was first shown the Nephite record on September 22, 1823? Each following year, on the same date, he was commanded to meet Moroni at the place where the plates remained buried. On September 22, 1827, the record was given to him. Later when the plates were taken from him for a time, following the loss of the 116 pages of manuscript, Joseph said the record was returned to him on that same date.

Since Rosh Hashanah falls on September 22 every nineteen years when the solar and lunar calendars coincide, 1998 was the most recent. If we extrapolate backward, subtracting nineteen year intervals, we discover it indeed fell on September 22, 1827, the day the plates were given to the young prophet. The last Nephite, Moroni, was the guardian and messenger of the plates, and this feast date must have had a Nephite significance as well as an Old world one. This strongly suggests the Lord appeared to the Nephites on the Feast day of Trumpets to bring his new covenant which was probably September 22. III Nephi tells us that at the end of the 34th year Christ appeared unto them. This Restoration gospel is supported by the dates of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the date our Savior died.

Brother Bolingbroke concluded his sermon by telling the congregation a story that supports the Restoration gospel. The title is "How I Heard and Accepted the Latter-day Message" by James Moler.

James was born in the state of Ohio, October 24, 1843. He grew up under the influence of the Christian Order, or Newlight Church. After serving four years in the Union Army in the Rebellion, he returned home, settled down in life, formally accepted the doctrine of the aforementioned church, and was immersed. He remained with that people about nine years. He tried earnestly to get a testimony of his acceptance with God. He prayed and fasted that he might receive some sure testimony. He, at times, felt to rejoice; but there still remained a longing and hungering that he thought ought to be satisfied.

He finally moved to West Virginia, where he came in contact with the Christian or Disciple Church. He investigated their claims and doctrine. He thought they had more truth than he had; and as he had made a solemn promise to accept light and truth, he expressed his willingness to cast his lot with them. In the year 1879 and 1880 he was received into full fellowship with that people, being received upon his former baptism.

In a short time he was set apart and ordained an elder in that church and was chosen to preside over the Salem congregation. He labored faithfully and earnestly with that people until the summer of 1881, but his longing and thirsting was still unsatisfied. About his time, or some time in the year 1880, his brother-in-law, T. J. Beatty, living in Ohio with his wife and two older daughters, accepted the gospel in its fullness, as they expressed it to him. His brother-in-law and James began corresponding in regard to the claims of the

Reorganized Church. James thought they were deceived and that in reality they had accepted Brighamism.

The Salem congregation had built a fairly good house of worship, and in the month of July or August he received a letter from his sister-in-law, Mrs T. J. Beatty, asking if they would entertain an elder a day or two, if they would send one there to preach the doctrine. James replied at once, "Yes, not only a day or two; but a week or two. Send him along. We will treat him kindly."

He fully expected that he would remove the scales from the minister and send him home a better man. Shortly after he wrote his sister-in-law to send the preacher, his brother-in-law, T.J. Beatty, came. He thought that he was the forerunner, and that the preacher would follow later on. But, after conversing upon different topics, to James' surprise he asked if James would be willing for Beatty to preach a few times in his church. James said, "Yes, certainly, just as long as you please. Just make yourselves at home, and I will see that you get a good hearing."

They arranged for meeting to begin on Thursday night. There was a fair sized congregation of good listeners. The preacher asked James to open the service for him, which he did. James then stepped down and took a seat about midway in the church, where he could look Beatty in the face, expecting that he would make a failure. James and Beatty had worshiped together in the Christian order, and while with that people he thought that Beatty was a long way from being a preacher.

Beatty took his text from Romans 1:16-17 and preached Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights with ease and power. James listened and wondered, though he thought Beatty would make a break after a while, and then he could step in and show him his folly. Sunday came, and it was 11 o'clock in the morning. At the close Beatty said, "Now, if there is anyone present that has anything to say, either for or against what I have said, they have the privilege to speak." Then he took his seat.

All eyes at once turned to James. They well knew that he would not allow a man to preach a doctrine in his pulpit that he did not believe without opposing it. James stood up and said in part, "My manner of life and conduct while among you has impressed you with the thought that I would accept truth and light wherever I should find it. And that man has come among us. He has conducted himself as a gentleman. He has preached the gospel in word; but whether or not he has what he claims, I do not know; and whether or not he has authority to preach the gospel and administer its ordinances, I do not know. But, if he has, he has more than I have, more than you have." He then turned directly to Beatty and said, "Will you tell me in the presence of God and these witnesses, that you have authority from God to preach the gospel and administer its ordinances?"

Beatty said, "I have." James then said "Will you tell me in the presence of God and these witnesses, that if I obey the gospel as you have taught it, and as it is recorded in the New Testament, God will give me testimony that it is true?" Beatty then stood up with tears running down his cheeks, raised his right hand toward heaven, and said, "I will meet you in judgement at the bar of God, and I will say unto you, if you will obey the gospel with an honest heart, having nothing in view other than to honor God and to save your soul, God will give you a testimony that the doctrine is true."

James said, "I am ready."

They then went and had dinner, and repaired to the water. James and his wife were baptized and were confirmed at the evening service, and in the Lord's own time the promise of the

preacher to him was fulfilled. He received the testimony as promised, and his longing, hungry soul was satisfied.

Some time after joining the church, James became concerned about the successor of Joseph the Seer. He prayed earnestly and the Holy Spirit came upon him beginning at his head, passing over and in him, and filling his entire being with a holy peace, joy and light that he could not explain. He did not understand it so he still called upon God in silent prayer to know the meaning of the manifestation.

James asked God if He had given him this testimony to bear witness that young Joseph was his father's successor and the church was true. Immediately he was filled with that holy influence and peace. James prayed again, not wishing to be deceived, and asked to have another testimony. At once he was completely immersed in the same element. It remained with him for a long time and then quietly left him rejoicing in full and complete satisfaction and assurance.

Let us never forget what a precious gospel we have which is supported by the dates of the founding of the church and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon with power.

From the Pastor's Desk

Continued from front page

at the other person as the source of these thoughts and emotions. Most often, however, we need instead to be looking and pointing at ourselves. We simply can't give our sins and hurts to God without acknowledging (confessing) to Him our part in the problem.

The promise is that if we confess our sins and truly repent, God will remove our sins from us. How far will be sins be moved away? They will be removed as far as the East is from the West. (Psalms 103:12)

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST
Mount Ayr Restoration Branch
607 E. Madison St.
Mount Ayr, IA 50854

News & Notes

Baptismal Service Announced

A baptismal service is planned for Saturday evening, August 3 at 6 PM at the Bill Stuart pond north of Lamoni. If you or anyone you know wishes to be baptized along with Elizabeth Rolfe, please contact our Pastor, Robert Rolfe.

Plans Set For Fall Retreat

September 20, 21, 22 are the dates to be placed on your calendar for the Fall Retreat at Farwesta. Details of the program will be announced in the September "Newsletter", but now is the time to set aside the weekend for study, worship and fun with our Southern Iowa and North Missouri brothers and sisters in the faith. Mount Ayr Restoration is responsible for serving the breakfast on Saturday morning. Patriarch Vernon Darling will be present throughout the weekend to give patriarchal blessings and assist in teaching the young adult class.

"Joseph, What a Life"

The title of this summer's musical has been chosen, but it has been postponed until next summer because of conflicts this next week. We hope everyone will plan to take part next year. There will not be a musical performance on Sunday, Aug. 11 as previously set.

Recent Missions

Ronald Smith will be returning from giving ministry in Kenya early the first week of August. He and fellow Seventy Neil Simmons of Dallas, Texas left shortly after the Seventy sponsored Missionary

Family Reunion to continue ministry among the Saints and those called to be Saints in that tropical country.

Norman and Cathy Nelson have just returned from giving ministry in Wyoming where they assisted in establishing a new Restoration congregation. They are now preparing to go to Mexico where they will spend some six weeks improving their Spanish and giving ministry from their base in Oaxaca. They will be hosted by Seventy Frank Frye and his wife Patty.

Our pastor Robert Rolfe and Lynda have just returned from a three week mission to the Navajo Indian Reservation in Arizona. They join with a number of Saints from the Independence area each summer to conduct a Reunion among the Native Americans. This summer the group, which is the largest Restoration congregation outside the Independence area, is erecting a church building. The Mount Ayr congregation recently voted to make a small donation to assist with that project.

Helen Landrum Dies

After many, many years confined to her bed in the Albany, Missouri Hospital, Helen Landrum passed away July 10, 2002. Ray Landrum is her husband.

Wedding planned

The congregation is invited to share in the wedding of Nathan Smith and Julie Howlett to be held at the South Chrysler Restoration Branch in Independence, MO at 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 10.