

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

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Taking Advice

There is a story about a Lamoni farmer that went to his lawyer's office. After talking for a time, he stood up to leave. The lawyer told him the charges were \$50. The old farmer said he wasn't paying. When asked why, he said, "I'm not taking your advice."

Advice is something that is easily given, but often rejected. To whom do you go for advice? When I was younger, I usually went to my friends for advice. The problem was, they didn't know any more than I did. I could have asked my parents, but of course, they didn't know anything! Now that I'm older, I've learned the value of good advice. "The older I get, the less I know" is how one person put it.

Solomon is reputed to be the wiser king in history. When he died, his son Rehoboam became king. Kings in those days had lots of counselors, wise men, and a prophet or two to give them advice. Did Rehoboam get his advice from the wise counselors around him? Of course not. He took the advice of his friends just like we do. He liked the advice of his friends because his friends told him to do what he already wanted to do. Rehoboam's problem was that his friends also didn't know any more than he did. The result? The kingdom of Israel split into two nations. Taking the wrong advice can have drastic consequences. (See I Kings 12).

Are we like Rehoboam? From whom do we get our advice? Do we reject good advice because it isn't what we want to hear? Solomon said, "A wise man will hear and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels. . . but fools despise wisdom and instruction (Proverbs 1:5). If you read on, you will find that Solomon says that we should seek counsel from God. Unfortunately, too many reject the counsel of God as found in his scriptures. They "despise wisdom and instruction." They (and us), like the Lamoni farmer, are unwilling to take advice.

TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

Sacrament in the Auditorium

The door of the Church of Jesus Christ, Mount Ayr Restoration Branch, was closed on April 6 to permit church members to attend a Sacrament Service held in the Auditorium, Independence, Missouri. Pastors of Restoration congregations in and around the Centerplace arranged for the service to be held on the one hundred seventy third anniversary of the organization of the church, April 6, 1830. Attendance was estimated in excess of 4,000 persons.

The doors of the Auditorium were opened at 8:30 a.m.. A musical ensemble composed of Nathan Smith at the piano, Julie Smith with her violin, Erica Bailey on the cello and Tammy Tandy with her flute offered fifteen minutes of worship music preceding the hymn sing led by Wayne Crawford of the Independence Restoration Branch. John Davies of the Grain Valley Branch provided five minutes of meditation music on the Auditorium organ that preceded the Processional Hymn, "Holy, Holy, Holy", which ushered in the vast number of Priesthood required to serve that large congregation.

High Priest Paul Gage of the Waldo congregation was in charge of the service. He remarked that he did not need to remind us of the significance of the date on which we were assembled. Then he read from the Doctrine and Covenants portions referring to the calling out of the wilderness the church of Jesus Christ and her mission to bring to pass God's purposes among the children of men, even Zion. We had just sung some of the older hymns of the church, "Open My Eyes that I May See", "We Would See Jesus", "Trust and Obey", "Come Learn of The Meek and Lowly", "I Have Found the Glorious Gospel", and now we sang the beloved "Redeemer of Israel" to open the service proper.

Bishop Joe Burkhart of the Grain Valley congregation spoke of the significance of the offering, not just in monetary terms but in the offering of ourselves to the work of the Kingdom, and offered the offertory prayer. The offering this morning was to go to pay the expenses incurred for the service with any additional funds being given to the Restoration Schools in the area.

High Priest Glen Friend of the Colburn Road congregation gave the Pastoral Comments concerning the sacrifice of our Lord which we

were remembering and the sacrifice required of us as stated in Psalm 51 - "A broken spirit, and a broken and contrite heart." We sang the familiar sacrament hymns, "O God The Eternal Father", "O Lord How Can It Be?", knelt with the body while the sacrament prayers were read, and watched with some sense of awe as the mass of Priesthood moved among us serving the emblems of our Lord's broken body and spilled blood.

As the Priesthood returned to their places at the front of the room and in the balcony seats reserved for them, we sang, "There's An Old, Old Path made strangely sweet by the touch divine of His blessed feet". Patriarch Vernon Darling spoke for the Patriarchs, some of whom were sitting with him on the rostrum. His message was one of counsel to the various Branches represented in the congregation to become united in their understandings and teachings so that they could be instrumental in bringing about the purposes for which they were called into the Kingdom at this time. Patriarch Verle Cornish verified the message as the will of God.

We stood and sang that incomparable hymn, "The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning," and Elder Sam Agwanda of Kenya, East Africa pronounced the benediction. As his prayer closed, the brass instruments of the antiphonal organ vibrated with the opening bars of "God of Our Fathers, whose almighty hand leads forth in beauty all the starry bands of shining worlds in splendor through the skies, our grateful songs before Thy throne arise." We stood, singing our recessional hymn thankfully and prayerfully, as the Priesthood left the chamber in procession as they had come. At the close of the hymn, the assembly dissolved into joyous fellowship.

Hosanna! Cry of the Faithful

Mark's story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem amid the people's cries of "Hosanna"! had just been read as a call to worship. Diane and Barbra Jordison had just sung "O How He Loves You and Me" and the congregation had sung "Alleluia" when Elder Alan Smith took his place at the podium and reminded us that we had been seeing pictures of the troops going into Iraq and people standing along the side waving and shouting and saying some kinds of things that kind of reminded him of people yelling and shouting as Jesus came into Jerusalem.

"We talk about Palm Sunday today," he said, "and maybe, just as some of those people in Iraq may not recognize exactly what was happening, that may have been the case for some of the people who were yelling and shouting and praising as Jesus came in on that first day. At least the scriptures tell us that by the end of the week some of them had changed their tune and were still shouting, but this time it was, 'Crucify Him!' instead of 'Hosanna! Save us!'"

"People of Jesus' time were looking for a person who would deliver them. You heard what Jerry read from Mark. I'm going to be reading the same story from Matthew. One of the things they were yelling was that Jesus was going to bring the kingdom of David back. He was bringing the kingdom, but they just had the wrong one. They didn't quite understand what was about to happen. Some of them were looking for physical freedom - release from the Roman rule. Jesus was bringing life eternal.

I'd like to look at the record of Palm Sunday as it is shared in the 21st chapter of Matthew, and then we will toss in some of the other records. The story is one that is recorded in all four gospels,

and each of them has just a little bit different detail about some of the things that happened." Brother Smith then read Matthew 21:1 'And when Jesus drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and they were come to Bethphage, unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two of his disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find a colt tied; loose it and bring it to me; and if any shall say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of it; and straightway he will send it.' (When you read the King James version, it talks about two animals being taken instead of one, which I thought was interesting. It talks about the donkey and the colt, the donkey's foal, that were taken. Mark and Luke don't say that and neither does the Inspired Version.) 'All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy king cometh unto thee, and he is meek, and he is sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass.' This is referring to the prophecy in Zachariah 9:9 that says almost exactly the same thing about Jesus. The king is coming. Specifically it says, 'Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion, Shout O daughter of Jerusalem; Behold thy king cometh unto thee. He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding upon the ass and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.' The full quote gives us a little more detail because it tells us that he is bringing us salvation, which is the reason people were yelling, 'Hosanna!'

"I'm not sure if there is any significance to the fact that he was riding on the colt, but in Judges it talks about the judges sometimes doing that. So in some ways this may also have indicated to those people that Jesus was coming in judgment.

"And the Disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them; and brought the colt, and put on it their clothes; and Jesus took the colt and sat thereon; and they followed him. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed in the way (Luke and some of the others tell us those were palm branches), and the multitudes that went before, and also that followed after, cried saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

"And Luke tells us that this is what the people said: 'And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice, and praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works they had seen: Saying, Blessed is the King who cometh in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven, and glory in the highest! And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude, said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.' (Luke 19:36-39).

"So Luke records a little different idea. This was what the disciples were shouting and it might have been a little bit different from what the multitude picked up on as they came down. They were praising God because of the mighty works that they had seen, and when Jesus was rebuked by the Pharisees for allowing the people to say these things, he said that if they held their tongues, the stones would cry out.

"Mark records it this way: And many spread their garments in the way; and others cut down branches of trees and strewed them in the way, And they that went before him and followed after, cried, saying, Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; that bringeth the kingdom of our father David; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest! (Mark 11:8-12).

“So we know that as they came into Jerusalem, the people were celebrating - were making way for Him with palm branches and with clothing that they laid down before Him. They were praising God and crying out, ‘Hosanna’. Matthew adds, ‘And when He was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, ‘Who is this?’ And the multitude said, This is Jesus of Nazareth, the prophet of Galilee. And Jesus went into the temple of God.’ Do you know what he did? ‘He cast out all of them that sold and bought in the temple and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.’

“So according to Matthew’s account, part of this Palm Sunday experience was Jesus cleansing the temple. And Jesus, when He said, ‘It is written’, was quoting a scripture from Isaiah 56:7 which says, ‘Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.’ That was what Jesus was referring to when He cast the money changers out. And then, what did Jesus do the first thing after He cleansed the temple? The blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed the!

Continuing to read from Matthew 21:13 on, our speaker asked, “Did you know that this is not the only time that ‘Hosanna!’ was called that day? ‘When the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children (The Inspired Version adds, ‘the children of the Kingdom’) crying in the temple and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David! they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearst thou what these say? And Jesus said unto them, Yea, have ye never read the scriptures that sayeth, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, O Lord, thou hast perfected praise?’ So not only along the way to the temple, but after Jesus cleansed the temple and healed the sick, even the children were saying, ‘Hosanna!’ Again Jesus was rebuked for allowing it to happen; and He shared that out of the things babes and sucklings would say and do as they called, ‘Hosanna!’, God’s praise would be perfected.

“Now it’s interesting that I can’t find what scripture Jesus was quoting. Most of the time when He says, ‘It is written,’ you can go back to the scriptures and find out to what scripture He was referring. At least ‘babes’, and ‘sucklings’, and ‘perfected praise’ don’t bring up anything on the scripture search. It would be interesting to find out sometime exactly what scripture He was quoting.

“Do you know that the only time ‘Hosanna’ is found in the Bible is in the story of Palm Sunday. What does Hosanna mean? Literally it means, ‘Pray, save us.’ or ‘Lord, save us!’ - a cry of acclamation and adoration. So only as Jesus came to the city do we have ‘Hosanna!’ found in the Bible.

“But, interesting enough, we have a ‘Palm Sunday’ in the Book of Mormon, if you want to call it that, or at least a point where people cried ‘Hosanna!’” Our speaker read from Third Nephi, 5:8, some of the Easter story from the Book of Mormon. ‘And a voice said to them, Behold my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name, hear ye him. And it came to pass as they understood, they cast their eyes up towards heaven; and behold, they saw a man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe, and he came down and stood in the midst of them, and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and they durst not open their mouths, even to one another, and wist not what it meant, for they thought it was an angel that had appeared unto

them.

“And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand, and spake unto the people, saying, Behold, I am Jesus Christ of whom the prophets testified should come into the world. And behold I am the light and the life of the world, and I have drunk out of the bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things, from the beginning.

“And it came to pass, when Jesus had spoken these words, the whole multitude fell to the earth, for they remembered that it had been prophesied among them that Christ would show himself unto them after his ascension into heaven. And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto them saying, Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands, and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.

“And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet, And this they did do, going forth one by one until all had gone forth, and did see with their eyes, and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety, and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it is written by the prophets, should come. And when they had all gone forth, and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying, Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God!, and they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him.’

“The people in America not only called, ‘Hosanna!’ They worshipped him as the Messiah and, as they called, ‘Lord, save us!’ had an understanding of what He had done for them as they felt His hands and His side.

“Did you know that we are commanded to cry, ‘Hosanna!’ in our day as well? Section 18 of the Doctrine and Covenants says, ‘Yea, preach, exhort, declare the truth, even with a loud voice and a sound of rejoicing, cry, Hosanna!, hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Lord God!’ We are called upon to have our Palm Sunday, not just at one time and not just in one place. In section 35 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord is talking to Edward Partridge and He says, ‘You are blessed, and your sins are forgiven you, and you are called to preach my gospel as with the voice of a trumpet; and I will lay my hand upon you by the hand of my servant Sidney Rigdon, and you shall receive my Spirit, the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, which shall teach you the peaceable things of the kingdom; And you shall declare it with a loud voice, saying Hosanna, blessed be the name of the most high God.’

“Is there any wonder that these words were picked up in that favorite hymn of the Restoration, ‘Redeemer of Israel’. ‘Hosanna! Hosanna! to God and the Lamb!’ Lord, save us!

“We come today to remember Jesus just as He asked to be remembered in His ministry through the ages with a covenant to follow Him. In the Book of Mormon, in the 6th chapter of Moroni, the church is asked to meet together often to fast and to pray, to speak with one another concerning the welfare of our souls, and to meet oft to partake of the bread and wine in remembrance of the Lord, Jesus. We meet today after a time of fasting and prayer and come together to remember Jesus, especially at this time of year, as we see the Last Supper and His death and resurrection played out before us at this Easter time. We remember the body and the blood of Jesus and His sacrifice for us. We remember the fact that we have chosen to be followers of Christ. We remember that we have

promised to keep His commandments, and we are witnessing that we will always remember Him, no matter what. In our daily lives we won't move from, 'Hosannas!' on Sunday to 'Crucify Him!' on Thursday. And we have the promise that if we will do this, His Spirit will be with us in all that we do. Let's remember the promise of, 'Hosanna!' given in the latter part of section 39, 'And inasmuch as they do repent and receive the fullness of my gospel, and become sanctified, I will stay my hand in judgment; wherefore go forth, crying with a loud voice, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand; crying, Hosanna! blessed be the name of the most high God. Go forth baptizing with water, preparing the way before my face, for the time of my coming; for the time is at hand; the day nor the hour no man knoweth; but it surely shall come, and he that receiveth these things receiveth me; and they shall be gathered unto me in time and in eternity. And again, it shall come to pass, that on as many as ye shall baptize with water, ye shall lay your hands, and they shall receive the Holy Ghost, and shall be looking forth for the signs of my coming; and shall know me, Behold, I come quickly. Even so, Amen.'

"May we raise our 'Hosannas!' today - Lord, save us - as we remember just what He did to do that for us. And may we have the promise of this service to be poured out - His Spirit to be with us always, that our cups may be filled and overflowing."

The Greatest Celebration

Elder Howard Parker of Independence, Missouri, son of Francis Parker of the Mt. Ayr congregation, opened his Easter sermon by reading, from John 11:1-44, the story of the death of Lazarus and of Christ raising him from the dead. (Please read it for yourself.)

After having been ordained for more than half of his life, this was the first Easter sermon Elder Parker had ever given. Of the experience he said, "It was not that I wanted to bring something out of the ordinary, but I really wanted to make it something special, praying that the Lord's Spirit would direct that which I would bring this morning. As I prepared I felt that I would simply want to go on a walk with you and look back at the life of Jesus Christ, what He meant to us and what He accomplished during His life - the real purpose that we remember this morning. I think it would be fair to say that to know Jesus is to love Him. But I also know and see all of the distractions of this world, and know that remembering Jesus becomes a discipline for each one of us. As we remember His resurrection, I would like to consider His life - the events that led up to Calvary, and more importantly, the importance of His victory over the grave.

Why Did It Have to Be?

"I would like to begin by recognizing that God is Creator, and we are His creation. There's a purpose to that because, by right of creation, we are His. We belong to Him. I bring this up because it is necessary to understand that the lower life form can never reach up to the higher life form. The ability to lift ourselves up to Him is not available within ourselves. And this truth goes throughout all nature. If I was to injure my foot, my foot has no power to heal itself, so what must happen is that the life blood from my body must go to my foot, take upon it the injury, and bring restoration back to that foot. In Acts 17:28 we read that 'in him we live and move and have our being.' But not only do we not have any ability to lift ourselves up physically, we cannot lift ourselves up spiritually. No man can

lift himself off himself as center. For this we need someone greater than ourselves, and that's why we call Him the Alpha and the Omega, the Great and Mighty God. It is only He that can lift ourselves off ourselves, and to be brutally honest, Brothers and sisters, we need more than just a little help. We need somebody to save us!

"In the fullness of time, there was presented to humanity a precious gift. That gift came as a baby, born of a virgin. The world will tell you today that there was no such thing as a virgin birth and even if there was, it doesn't matter. But Brothers and Sisters, there had to be a virgin birth. If it was not a virgin birth, then this birth of our Savior would have been the design of a man and a woman, and this man would have been born under the fall as well as we are. But because it was a virgin birth, He was born part deity and He had the power of heaven. He was a special person! Now He wasn't just a person, but He was God, and He had within His power that ability, not only to lift us up, but to make restitution.

"Alma 16:208-216 speaks of this particular sacrifice. 'For it is expedient that an atonement should be made; for according to the great plan of the eternal God, there must be an atonement made or else all mankind must unavoidably perish; Yea, all are hardened; yea, all are fallen, and are lost, and must perish except it be through the atonement which it is expedient should be made; for it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it shall be an infinite and eternal sacrifice. Now there is not any man that can sacrifice his own blood, which will atone for the sins of another.'

Alma explains that each person answers for his own sins, and only a great last sacrifice will atone for the sins of the world. This last sacrifice ends the shedding of blood in sacrifice, 'then shall the Law of Moses be fulfilled, ... every jot and tittle. And behold, this is the whole meaning of the law; every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice', which is the sacrifice of the Son of God which shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name. 'This being the intent of this last sacrifice to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice and bringeth about means unto man that they may have faith unto repentance.'

Jesus Understands His Mission

"We know not much is recorded about His growth to manhood except for the time that at age twelve He was found of His parents in the temple, teaching the Scribes and the Pharisees, but it is clear through these scriptures that He had a keen awareness of His mission, for when His mother questioned Him, He replied, 'I must be about my Father's work!' at age twelve!

"Now let's jump forward to Christ's ministry as an adult. In the beginning, God said, 'Let there be light.' John the Beloved spoke of this light, John 1:1. 'In the beginning was the gospel preached through the Son. and the gospel was the Word, and the Word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made which was made. In him was the gospel, and the gospel was the life; and the life was the light of men; and the light shineth in the world, and the world perceiveth it not.' This of which John preached was especially difficult for the Jews of the time to comprehend. The Jews are a wonderful people. The sign of Israel is the lion, and with all the prophets of old, they looked forward to the redeemer. But in their mind, they had it fixed that that redeemer would be a lion that would come in great power and free them from all the Roman oppressive-

ness that had kept them bound for many years. Yet when Jesus appeared, He appeared as a baby. And when He grew to be a man, He came, not as a lion, but as a lamb. It would be from this disenchantment that the Jews would inevitably send Him to the purpose of His life. And Jesus came for one purpose, and one purpose alone - and that purpose was to die for us.

“Section 18:2 h-i - ‘For, behold, I, God have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer, if they would repent; but if they would not repent, they must suffer even as I; which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit’. This is the concept that eluded His disciples from the time they were chosen to the very moment when Christ was on the cross. They were with Him throughout His ministry. They saw how He healed the sick, made the blind to see, the lame to walk. They believed within their hearts, even as Peter had spoken in the great understanding, that this was the Son of God; and yet, with all the miracles and all the purpose of heart that the Lord showed unto them in His ministry, the one thing that they were not understanding was the purpose of His ministry. Christ spoke to them and said, ‘The Son of Man must suffer, even as it is written.’ The sacrifice of Christ wasn’t something that happened while He was out preaching the gospel. The sacrifice of Christ is the Gospel. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up. And when men came to Him and said, ‘We would see Jesus’, He said that, ‘As a corn of wheat must fall to the ground and die, or it abideth alone, but if it should die, it would bring forth much fruit.’ He was speaking of Himself, for Jesus was the seed of the Kingdom of God; and that seed fell from the throne of heaven and found root in the hearts of all mankind. And then it died, and had it not died, there would be no kingdom.

“Brothers and Sisters, Jesus was not robbed of His life. He freely laid it down. It was at His command that He put into motion the forces behind those things that would lead to His death, and He presided over His own execution. Jesus was not punished for us, although He did suffer. There’s a vast difference between the two. Our Heavenly father does not punish the innocent. What happened is that our blindness had to be revealed, and it was imperative that it should be shown unto us. It was made known to us through the body of Christ. The pain that Christ bore was the price that had to be paid for our understanding. And the reason for that is that sacrifice is the instrument of love. As Christ died, He became the mediator between God and man. As I said earlier, He was not just a man. He was also divinity, and His life on this earth was for the sole purpose of dying that He might bring restitution - that He might fill the gap that was placed between ourselves and our Lord through our sins. He lived that through the life that He shared with us physically, He might take hold of all the earth, and through the life of His divinity, He might reach up and continue to grasp the hand of His Father that through His sacrifice, He might bring these two hands together, bringing restoration to that which was at the beginning of time.

True Sacrifice Has a Purpose

“Might I add that sacrifice has a purpose. What Christ did was not an accident. It was not something that was ill planned. Every step of the way Christ was presiding. I know that sacrifice many times has a dulled sense of understanding. Sacrifice sometimes is what we do when the rest of the family wants to eat beans and I want corn. But, Brothers and Sisters, that’s not true sacrifice. That would be like me saying to David and Karen that I love you so much I am

going to jump into the Grand River and drown. Sacrifice has a purpose, Brothers and Sisters, and I’m really not trying to be serious. If you turned that story around and in my love for David and Karen, I found them on the Grand River with their canoe tipped over. Knowing that they can’t swim, I was then to throw my life in to save their lives and in the process lose mine, then we begin to understand how our Savior sacrificed Himself for us.

“So it was that Christ was lifted upon the cross. You have all seen the great movies that are out so can imagine the scene about those large nails being driven through His hands and through His feet. Imagine within our hearts and minds the pain and suffering that He had to endure on our behalf. Yet the agony of the cross was not just the tearing of the flesh. The true pain for Christ came, as it speaks in Second Corinthians, when He became sin for us. It was then He had to experience something that had never occurred in His life - separation from His Heavenly Father. And for a moment, I don’t believe He understood completely when He cried, ‘My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?’ As soon as He became sin for us, His Heavenly Father had to turn His back on Him because no unclean thing, even as it is written, can stand in His presence. And not only was He suffering with the separation of the Spirit being removed from Him, He also had to endure the mocking. Can you imagine being on the cross and having the people mock - how they could add insult to injury, and yet as it is recorded, the very words they used were the words of God. As Caiphas spoke to His disciples and said, ‘It is better that one man should die than that a whole nation should perish’. When He hung on the cross in great agony and the people looked at Him and said, ‘He saved others but He cannot save Himself!’ those people didn’t realize they were speaking the word of God, and that they had touched upon an eternal truth; for if Christ would have saved Himself, there would have been no salvation for any of us. And He endured that pain in love. Then at three o’clock it ended with the words, ‘It is Finished! Into thy hands I commend my spirit.’

Views of the Death Of Christ Vary

“If I could, I’d like to step aside for a moment and consider what was going on in the hearts and minds of the disciples at this point. As we touch upon one theme here, all of us being disciples of Christ in one way or another, we have to imagine at that point what was going on in the minds of those disciples. When the disciples knew that Jesus was dead, His body was removed from the cross, wrapped and laid in a sepulcher and a guard was placed at the tomb. They were in great despair, not only in the fact that Jesus was now dead. I believe that they struggled with a belief that scourged the people at that time - the idea that Christ’s death was evidence to them that God had deserted Him - that somehow God had deserted His own Son. Both Jews and Gentiles shared a common belief that disaster was the punishment for evil. Jesus in His ministry denied this superstition often, specifically regarding the slaughter of the Galileans by Pilate and the fall of the tower of Siloam in which 18 people were killed in its collapse (Luke 13:1-5). Consider also the blind man whose story is found in John 9. As you recall, what was the question asked by the disciples? Is this man blind because of the sin of his parents or his sin? This was something that was driven deep into the hearts of this people, and it’s something that Christ Himself taught against constantly with His disciples. So you can see that when Jesus was laid in the tomb, even though they had a desire to believe His word, there was still that thought that perhaps, maybe Christ had been deceived. Even though He had all these wonderful gifts and had shown power, and love, why did He die? Why did He

have to die?

“Perhaps we should also at this point consider what was going on in the mind of our eternal adversary, Satan. From the beginning of time, Satan had sought the seat of God, and when he was dispatched from heaven, his one goal on this earth was to make all men miserable like unto himself. Can you imagine what’s in his soul as he began to work his evil, placing in the hearts of men to destroy the Savior? Can you imagine his joy as Christ hung in pain and agony upon the cross and then he watched Him die? Then can you imagine his thrill, sinking into the pits of hell believing to receive Him? The scripture is very clear that Satan knows not the mind and will of God, and that the very ploys and tactics that Satan used to destroy our Savior, were the very means by which he set in motion the plan of salvation. Imagine his discomfort when his divine prisoner appeared, and was not a prisoner. With Him were the keys to death and hell!

The Resurrection Is Real! It’s Meaning Revealed

“I believe it will be a wonderful opportunity when we get to sit down with our Lord and Savior and understand all of these things. But we do know this, that the resurrection happened, and that the plan of God went through. We are all familiar with the story of Mary Magdalene and Mary and Martha who went to anoint His body and when they arrived, the stone was put aside and there were angels, and they told them that Christ had risen. Some women went and told the disciples, but Mary Magdalene stayed, believing within her heart that someone had stolen the body of Jesus. She began to weep. Jesus appeared unto her but she recognized Him not. She asked, ‘Sir, please tell me where they moved the body of my Master’. And Jesus said, ‘Mary!’ And when she looked up, the veil was parted and she realized that in front of her was the Son of God, her Redeemer. “As word reached the apostles, the scriptures record, Peter and John took off running. And it states that John was a little bit quicker than Peter and reached the sepulcher first to find that the tomb was open, the grave cloths were folded, and no body was there. Peter was distraught, but I believe John remembered.

“As the resurrection slowly dawned upon them, first Mary, then John and then the rest of the disciples, I believe that the Lord showed a great deal of tact in slowly opening up the understanding about the resurrection that was necessary. He allowed the testimonies to reach their ears. He allowed them to see the empty tomb. He allowed their hearts and minds to begin to open and to break toward the larger meaning of what was going on. He did this with the brethren walking to Emmaus. You know, Jesus could have very simply asked, ‘What’s going on?’ And they could have said, ‘Our Lord and Savior was just crucified.’ He could have said, ‘Here I am!’ But in so doing those men would have been overcome with excitement and joy and perhaps emotion, but Jesus wanted to speak to them. He first talked to them about the scriptures. He opened their eyes and their understanding, and as He began to walk them through the scriptures, He revealed Himself to them. In so doing, He was able to not only open up their understanding, but was to bring light to their eyes, and they knew from that point that all their hopes and dreams were confirmed.

“From this point, those men that we know as the Apostles were no longer the same. The Apostles of the Acts were not the same men that we met in the Gospels. They were different in faith, temperament, mind and spirit, courage and in their power to stand firm and endure. At Calgary they had all of these parts except for one, and that was the resurrection. Jesus’ resurrection opened up the way to their understanding, and it fused together in one a great assurance

for the future. This is the reason that Christ died. This is the reason why He came. He died that there might be a death that we could share in. This is the victory that we remember today. This is reason we celebrate.

“So what does it all mean? I don’t know that I can even answer that question. Is there not a little of Lazarus in each of us? Is the Lord trying to resurrect something in us? In the Lazarus story, verses 25 and 26, Jesus said unto Martha, ‘I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.’ The disciples never really understood this. But after the resurrection, not only did they understand it, but they realized that it was the stating of the fact of a spiritual experience and not just a physical one. And I believe it would be well for all of us to seek this counsel from our Lord and to seek Him out to bring us to an understanding that Christ lives. “I had the joy of a child in my life recently. I would be the first to admit I am probably one of the lower forms when it comes to being a good father, but you try to do what you can. You learn by your mistakes, and I make plenty of those. I was really touched as my wife shared with me something that happened at Wal Mart, of all places. They were in line at the fast checkout lane. Katelin was sitting in the cart and as the lady was putting out their stuff, she looked at Katelin and said something to her. Katelin used the opportunity. She stood up and said, ‘Jesus is alive, and He’s in my heart!’

“There’s a purity in children that the Lord has called us to. And when we become pure like that, the resurrection isn’t such a deep thing after all. Brothers and Sisters, what happened at Calgary, Jesus dying on the cross, is not a reflection of the glory of God. It is the glory of God! Our task is to empty ourselves of everything in this world so that the Father might be in us and through us. There’s a testimony that I heard once about a man who was watching a silversmith stirring a large pot of silver. As the heat of the silver grew in intensity, the slag would come to the top and the man would scoop the slag off and throw it away. He kept doing it from time to time, and the man finally asked him, ‘Sir, when do you know when the silver is pure?’ He said with a smile, ‘When I see my image in it.’ Only are we pure, Brothers and Sisters, when God sees His image in us. When God sees His image in us, the world will see His image in us, too.

“We struggle with giving ourselves. In the Beatitudes of Matthew 5, there’s a particular phrase that catches my attention. It says that when a man requires that you go one mile, go twain. I looked that up one time. In the time of Christ, the hordes of armies that traveled through that area would require the young men to carry their packs for them. The Romans who were the most civilized, if you could use that word, of these groups of men, only required these young men to carry their pack one mile. It was pretty common to see these young men mark off one mile from their homes and there stick a stick in the ground so when required to carry a pack, they would walk to that stick, drop the pack, turn around and go home. Brothers and Sisters, do we not do this when we consider what we have been asked to accomplish concerning the kingdom of God? Do we not all mark off someplace and say, ‘Lord, I want your kingdom, but I’m only able to go thus far and no farther.’ There’s nothing wrong with putting a stick in the ground. Christ Himself did it. The only difference is that He was lifted up on His in our behalf.

“The disciples were with the resurrected Savior. They watched Him taken up into heaven. As they stood there, a messenger from the Lord said, ‘You men of Galilee, why stand ye looking up into

heaven? This same Jesus whom ye saw go into heaven shall one day return in like manner.’ Brothers and Sisters, let us examine ourselves. That time is not too far distant. We need to prepare ourselves for the one great celebration that awaits us all.

An Invitation to Celebration

“I would like to close using Moroni, chapter ten, the last words of the Book of Mormon - an invitation to all. ‘Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in Him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God, ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in no wise deny the power of God. And again, if ye, by the grace of God, are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father, unto the remission of your sins that ye become holy without spot.’

“I do believe there is a little bit of Lazarus in each one of us, and the Lord has called us in these the Latter Days to go the extra mile. How far is the extra mile? To the very end of ourselves. There was a purpose that Jesus waited four days - many purposes actually. One of those purposes was to dispel a myth of the Jews that when one dies, the spirit of that person will hover over the body for three days during which it can be returned to the body; and on the fourth day that spirit would return to glory and the physical body would then become putrid and foul smelling. The Lord waited for that fourth day, knowing that they believed this, once again to prove that He had power over death. But that wasn’t the only issue. The Lord wanted to teach them a lesson - a lesson that applies to each one of us today. The Lord could have saved Lazarus because Mary and Martha both had faith in Jesus. But Jesus took them to the end of their faith. Jesus allowed their faith to extend itself to the point at which it ran out. That’s a terrible point, but at that point, the faith of Jesus took over. Brothers and Sisters, we are in the last days. We need to humble ourselves and become one with our Lord through faith believing that we might endure these last days - that we might be with Him when He comes in His glory. This is a wonderful celebration. I believe in this celebration, but one day there will be a great, a wonderful family reunion of all those who are in Christ, and I pray that each one of you will have the opportunity to experience the joy of seeing the Savior with His arms open in front of you, saying, ‘Well done, my faithful servant.’

Our speaker then offered a prayer for us out of his desire to leave this congregation with more than he had given so far. He asked for a Father’s blessing that served as a benediction for the service that concluded with hymn joyously affirming that Christ is alive! His cross stands empty. His love shall never die!

God’s Plan For America

Subtitled, I’ll See You In Zion!

For his opening scripture, Elder Jack Hagenson of Independence, Missouri read Moroni’s summary of the plan of God for this land on which that Holy City, the New Jerusalem would be built in the last days, and for all the House of Israel. Moroni was reporting the record and prophecies of Ether which he found on the 24 gold plates which were among the records hidden up by his father Mormon. Please read Ether 6:1-13 for yourselves.

Elder Hagenson first noted the presence of a number of Saints

from the Independence area in the congregation. Seventy Steve DeVera had arranged for five couples to take advantage of the beautiful spring weather to “bike” to the service from the Centerplace. Then Brother Hagenson expressed his amazement at how the Spirit is working. He found the adult class, led by Rob Rolfe, being handed a copy of the Declaration of Independence for study. That document was significant, along with the Constitution of these United States and writings of early patriots, to the topic about which he intended to speak.

God Sent a Duck

Next our speaker spoke directly to the children and shared his testimony of an experience he had at age ten, just the age of a little girl he noted in the assembly. Jack had a 4 H project raising ducks. He said, “Guess what. I had only hens. I didn’t have any green headed mallard drake, so obviously I wasn’t going to raise any more ducks. So I went to my father and I said, ‘Dad, I need to have a greenhead, a male duck.’ He said, ‘All right, I think I can arrange that in maybe a couple of weeks.’ I thought to myself, ‘Two weeks! That’s an awful long time.’

“So that evening, I prayed to the Lord for a male duck. And you know, on our farm out in the state of Washington, we had a problem with beavers who would build up dams in the creek, and we would have sometimes four or five acre ponds. That morning I walked down to the pond to make a raft to go out on the pond. (There were ten of us children, and we made a lot of things.) As I walked to the pond, there were some ducks that flew overhead, and as I got out on the water on the raft, guess what I saw. There was a greenhead, a mallard duck, and it had its head stuck into the fork of two limbs like this (he demonstrated) and there was another limb growing up, and you know that duck was paddling for all he was worth. He had his head in that fork and was trying to force his body through that crook in that branch. So I went out on my raft and I had my male duck. I got bit several times because he was wild, but it didn’t hurt that bad. I took him home, clipped his wings and you know, it wasn’t long before I had some little ducks.

“I’ve thought about that story many times and how the Lord answered that prayer. And He will answer your prayers, too, when you pray. I don’t care how old a child you are, you know He answers prayer, doesn’t He?

A Young Husband Is Reborn

“You know when I became a member of this church, I had a rebirth experience. I’ll give you a short version of my testimony. Before Lois and I were marriage I found out that she belonged to this strange church, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. I was preparing to be a Lutheran minister. We fell in love, got engaged, and then started fighting over religion, she over her church and I over mine. In spite of that, we got married by Paul Fischel, an RLDS minister, by the way. (Paul presented the Gospel to my wife, and also years later to me.)

“My wife and I were literally on the verge of divorce every day over religion. You see, I had promised her a number of things, and I broke the promises. I promised her, number one, that I wouldn’t drink again, and I broke that promise on our honeymoon. We met some friends in San Francisco, stayed with them a couple of days, and we drank together. I remember her going to sleep crying because I broke that promise. We promised that we would study each other’s church. She came to the Lutheran church with me and studied. Then it was my turn, but I didn’t go! She would leave the Book of Mormon or the Bible open to certain specific pages. I would ignore them. She would place tracts on the kitchen table. I

would pick them up and throw them into the trash. Pretty nice guy, wasn't I? But, you know, all of a sudden there were no more tracts - no more Bibles, no more Book of Mormons opened; because my wife did something that we all need to do with out loved ones. She said, 'I can't do a thing with him. He's yours!' And she gave me to the Lord.

"We lost a little boy in the meantime which really softened my heart, and we started praying together. Then, one day, I was home, sick from work, and I said, 'Have you got anything to read?' It took her about ten seconds, and she was back with what I thought was a murder mystery at first, The Call At Evening, and you know, I couldn't put it down! When she asked if I wouldn't like to have some cottage meetings. I asked what they were, and she told me. So we studied with Brother Paul Fischel for about six months, and everything just fit into place. I had always believed in God- always believed in Christ, that He came and died for me and for you and rose for you and for me, but, you know, there never was that personal relationship that all of us need to have with our Savior. Paul finally said, 'I have presented you with everything I know. You will have to ask God.' (Isn't that true, how we all need to go to God to get our answer?) And I'll never forget offering that prayer lying in bed. This was my prayer, probably the most sincere prayer I have ever offered for myself. "Lord, I have to know! Is this church true? Is this work true? I don't care if my friends disown me, If my family disowns me. I have to know, is this work true?" I meant every word. I was lying in bed, and I literally believe that I was raised off of that bed. I thought I was going through the ceiling. The power of the Holy Ghost came, and I was born in an instant! Born again! And the Lord spoke to me. His first words were these, 'You are forgiven of your sins.'"

"You are forgiven of your sins!" Brother Hagenson repeated with deep emotion. "And then He said, 'This work is true and I have a work for you to do.' It has been a wonderful adventure ever since. I was a twenty six year old young man at the time. It has been wonderful!

"But you know, I went to my mother, told her what had happened and that I was going to be baptized. She said, 'You are no longer my son!' You know, I knew - I understood, because I was treating my wife the way I had treated her. A couple of weeks later, I went back to the Lutheran church, Mother's day, put my arm around her and said, 'Mom, happy Mother's Day!' And she said, 'Jack! I can't give you up!' A wonderful mother. 'I can't give you up, but that terrible Book of Mormon has got hold of you.' But before she passed away, almost a hundred years old in 1997, she was very grateful that I was a minister in this church. We had a lot of wonderful talks about the Kingdom of God.

Brought To This Land by God

"My parents were brought to this land. I have made a couple of trips to Scandinavian countries, was actually near the place where my parents were born, and where my father was baptized as an infant in the Lutheran church. My mother was the youngest of three girls. When the family lands were given out, there was not enough for three girls. So when my mother got her inheritance and was married, she and my father came over to this land. They went to Canada, were there for a few years and lost all they had in the dust bowl days. April 6, 1923 they moved to the state of Washington where I and most of the rest of my family were born.

"When you look back, you can see how the Lord has moved in your life. Many times when you are not aware of it, His hand is there. The one thing I want you to remember about what I might

have to share with you this morning is, 'Stay on course! Regardless of what happens around you. 'Stay on Course!' He repeated emphatically, 'because the plan has been laid from the beginning of time - from the foundation of the world. The plan of salvation - all of these things were laid for you and for me from the very beginning; and even though there would be those who would entice you to take you away from that path, you stay on that path!

"Many stories have come out of 9/11 and out of the Iraqi war that have been very heart touching. Those rescuers as they were going up the steps into the towers had no idea what was going to happen to their lives. They were trained to rescue, and as Brother Delbert has said many times, we not only baptize members. We baptize missionaries. You are trained through the gospel of Jesus Christ to be a rescuer. We are trained to be out there saving lives." Brother Hagenson expressed concern that so many branches are not conducting cottage meetings - are not sharing in the missionary work - are not baptizing souls into the branch? "You know, there is someone who is depending on you to hear your testimony, and God is depending on you; because you have a testimony that no one else has that will reach others.

"And I know God has blessed this land with testimonies. I want to just recap a little bit about this scripture. With that Brother Hagenson turned to the topic of a chosen land. "The prophet Ether pointed out," he said, "that this land was a choice land above all other lands. And there were many, many things that happened throughout our nation's history to verify that."

"You know the New Jerusalem was to be established in this land, this chosen land. Joseph, the son of Jacob was preserved from the pit. His brothers wanted to kill him, but one of the brothers said, 'No! Let's don't kill him!' And we know that they killed an animal, took Joseph's coat of many colors, put blood all over it and sent it back to their father saying that he had been killed. But we know that instead, he was sold to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. "Twenty pieces of silver!" Jack repeated recalling that Jesus was sold by Judas for thirty pieces of silver. "Joseph was in the pit, but God had a plan for him to escape. If you are living in sin - if there is sin in your life, God has a way - a plan to get you out of the pit and to set your feet upon the right places.

"I'm amazed at the harmony between the fifth chapter of Matthew and the fifth chapter of the Third Book of Nephi. They both say that before we get on the path, blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness. Blessed are those that are pure in heart for they shall see God. Blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Both scriptures say the way onto the path is repentance, baptism by water and by fire - by the Holy Ghost. You will not find this in the King James Version but in both of these, then you are on the path. The covenant has been made. The 'blessed are these' come after we are set on that path.

"And so Joseph was sold into Egypt, and was preserved in Egypt for a marvelous plan that has a definite connection with this country; for it was Joseph's seed, his posterity, Manasseh and Ephriam that would come to this land, the land of their inheritance, to build up the New Jerusalem. And we know even this day - Brother Rolfe asked the question about being scattered, how we were being scattered and are we any different. We are no different. The reason the church is being fragmented - the reason why we are being scattered? When there is unholiness, you will always be scattered. There will always be confusion, but the time will come when the Lord will set His hand again, and you will be regathered. The righteous will be regathered. That's the purpose for scattering - to

be separated from God so you will seek Him again - so you will come after Him with all your heart. Sin, when it takes hold, if we don't get it out of our lives, it will take root and pretty quick it will dominate your lives. That's why the Christ has come into the world, and why the Lord has called us to be rescuers.

Gems of Glory

"I call testimonies about this land 'Gems of Glory', and I just recently discovered some of them." Our speaker held up a book that Roy Weldon mentioned a number of times in his Book of Mormon Deeps. Manly Palmer Hall gathered some of the documents that were written many years ago and published them about 1947 in The Secret Destiny of America. Jack also recommended that we read Peter Marshall, Jr. and Dave Emmanuel's The Light and the Glory and From Sea to Shining Sea. When the Puritans and their followers came here, he said, it was not for economic reasons. The primary reason when they came to this land - their motto was 'No King but Jesus!"

Brother Hagenson then asked us to picture ourselves in the Old State Hall in Philadelphia. "I have been there, and you know what? It's a plank board building. It's very, very humble, the place where those patriots were meeting. And there was a lot of confusion because of the turmoil. If they broke away - those young men who were there, they had a destiny that God had placed in their lives, just like Mark and Heide and some of you have. (He pointed out some of Graceland the students present.) There's a destiny all of us have concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ and the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God upon this land. We have been called to that task.

"In that old State room, there was a lot of confusion, a lot of arguing because they knew that it might be the guillotine for some of them or they might be shot or hung because they were breaking away from Great Britain." Then Jack read from page 164 of The Secret Destiny of America :

"On July fourth, 1776, in the Old State House in Philadelphia a group of patriot men were gathered for the solemn purpose of proclaiming the liberty of the American colonies. From the letters of Thomas Jefferson which are preserved in the Library of Congress, I have been able to gather considerable data concerning this portentous session. In reconstructing the scene it is well to remember that if the Revolutionary War failed, every man who had signed the parchment then lying on the table, would be subject to the penalty of death for high treason."

"I'm going to stop there for a moment. We are well aware in our area of Independence, of the young couple that was over in the Philippines who were held hostage for more than a year. She was a graduate of Calgary Bible College in Grandview. She bore her testimony of how her husband laid his body on hers when he was killed. She was protected because of her husband. Jesus laid down His life for the protection of the church, didn't He? He gave Himself for it. And she said in testimony that when you become a missionary and go to a foreign land or any place, you don't think about your life. You think about the giving of your life.

Resuming reading, Brother Hagenson read, "It should also be remembered that the delegates representing the various colonies were not entirely of one mind as to the qualities which should dominate the new nation. There were several speeches. In the balcony, patriot citizens crowded all available space and listened attentively to the proceedings. Jefferson expressed himself with great vigor and John Adams spoke with great strength. The Philadelphia printer, Dr. Benjamin Franklin quiet and calm as usual spoke his mind with well chosen words. The delegates hovered

between sympathy and uncertainty as the long hours of the summer day crept by. Life is sweet when there is danger of losing it. The lower doors were locked, and a guard was posted to prevent interruption.

"According to Jefferson, it was late in the afternoon before the delegates gathered their courage to the sticking point. The talk was about axes, scaffolds and the gibbet when suddenly a strong, bold voice sounded, 'Gibbet? They may stretch our necks on all the gibbets in the land. They may turn every rock into a scaffold, every tree into gallows, every home into a grave, and yet the words of that parchment can never die. They may pour our blood on a thousand scaffold, and yet from every drop that dyes the axe, a new champion of freedom will spring into birth. The British king may blot out the stars of God from the sky, but he cannot blot out His words written on that parchment. The works of God may perish - His words never! The words of this declaration will live in the world long after our bones are dust. To the mechanic in his workshop, they will speak hope. To the slave in the mines, freedom, but to the coward king, these words will speak in tones of warning they cannot choose but hear.

"Sign that parchment! Sign! If the next moment the gibbet's rope is about your neck. Sign if the next moment this hall rings with the clash of falling axes. Sign by all your hopes in life or death as men, as husbands, as brothers. Sign your names to the parchment or be accursed forever. Sign, and not only for yourselves, but for all ages; for that parchment will be the textbook of freedom, the Bible of the rights of man forever. Nay, do not start and whisper with surprise. It is a truth. Your hearts witness it. God proclaims it. Look at this strange band of exiles and outcasts suddenly transformed into a people. A handful of men weak in arms but mighty in God-like faith. Nay, look at your recent achievements, your Bunker Hill, your Lexington, then tell me, if you can, that God has not given America to be free.

"It is not given to our poor human intellect to cry into the skies and to pierce the councils of the almighty One, but methinks I stand among the awful clouds which veil the brightness of Jehovah's throne. Methinks I see the recording angel come trembling up to that throne and speak his dread message, 'Father the old world is ---- in defeat - Nations lost in blood, murder and superstition, walking hand in hand over the graves of the victims, and not a single voice of the hope of men. He stands there, the angel, trembling with the record of human guilt; but hark! The voice of God speaks from out of the awful cloud. 'Let there be light again! Tell my people, the poor and oppressed to go out from the old world, from oppression and blood, and build up my altar in the new. As I live, my friends, I believe that to be His voice. Yes, were my soul trembling on the verge of eternity, were this hand freezing in death, were this voice choking in the last struggle, I would still, with the last impulse of that soul, with the last wave of that hand, with the last gasp of that voice, implore you to remember this truth. God has given America to be free!"

"It goes on and gives some other things here. You are free, and every man rushed to the table, John Hancock being the first to sign the Declaration of Independence. They turned to thank their mysterious visitor, but he was nowhere to be found. Remember, the doors were locked. The chamber was full, but the mysterious visitor gone. God has established this nation to be free!

"Abraham Lincoln wrote many things, but during a time of crisis, March 30, 1863, with the war news progressively worsening, Abraham Lincoln, following their example wrote these words, 'It

is the duty of nations as well as men, to own their dependence on the overruling power of God - to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon. Those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.' Sounds like from Ether, doesn't it? And the very next day, on March 31, 1863, he said, 'We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown.' Do you think it sounds like America today? 'But we have forgotten God, and we have vainly imagined in the deceitfulness of our hearts that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace - too proud to pray to the God that made us. It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves, to confess our national sins and pray for clemency and forgiveness.' And he - the President of the United States - proclaimed a fast.

Zion Will Be For All People

"You know the Latter Day Prophet gave detailed instruction of why the Lord has brought this church, why He has brought this work into being. Read Doctrine and Covenants Section 57. It established the literal place for the establishment of Zion, and Independence is the Centerplace. We know this is for an everlasting inheritance, not just for Independence but for the whole world. In Church History, Vol. 1, pages 297-298 there is described an early plat for the city of Zion that tells how the first part is to be laid out. When that's completed, it says, lay out another. When that's completed, lay out another until the whole world be filled.

"We are on the verge of some mighty things happening in this nation, along with very terrible things. A good friend - if I would mention his name, you all would recognize it, but he doesn't want me to give his name - bore this testimony to me a couple of weeks ago. He was awakened, and these words came as the strongest thunder that he has ever heard in his life, 'Awake! Awake! The bridegroom cometh. Go ye out to meet Him!' When he told me those words, I really thought of Brother Walter Weldon's book, Tell My People. If you haven't read that book, you ought to read it. Walter said the messenger came to him and gave him twelve things that were coming upon the face of the earth, and number seven was, 'Tell My people that we are living in the time of the parable of the ten virgins - the five wise and the five foolish. Those who were within the kingdom.'

"I ask you a question, Brothers and sisters. It says they were awakened. All ten were asleep. Who woke the ten virgins? This brother who had the experience of, 'Awake! Awake! The Bridegroom cometh!' said the Lord told him it was the friends of the bridegroom who awakened them! It was the friends of the Bridegroom - those that were living on that celestial level - who were living like Jesus Christ would have them live. They were warning the people. They were the Paul Reveres of our times who were going to the nations of the earth, who were going to the next door neighbor!

"I have to tell you this experience. A few years ago I had become well acquainted with the neighbors down the street. They had a teen age daughter who had gotten married - Joy. I was out in the front yard picking cherries when Joy stopped by with her new husband. We visited for about fifteen minutes and I gave Joy and Brad some cherries. They went off. It was pretty small talk for those fifteen minutes. I waved to them for the next couple of years, and then I heard that Brad had passed away. He was an engineer working at the power plant. Just a young man, but he had a heart

attack climbing the ladder at work and died.

"When I heard that, the voice of the Spirit spoke to me and said, 'You are going to do his funeral service'. I thought, 'I don't even know him. How can I do the funeral service?' A few hours later I saw Joy turn into her parents driveway, get out of her car and start walking towards me. I knew what she was going to ask. The Lord always prepares. But the words that she spoke really surprised me. She said, 'Jack I would like to have you do Brad's funeral service. Would you do it?' And I said, 'Sure, Joy. The Lord has already told me.' But these are the words that surprised me. She said, 'You are the only minister that he really knew!' A few minutes and a wave! You know those times that we have with people are very, very precious. We don't always know - the right hand, what the left hand is doing - but we know that the Lord is in control. There was a wonderful experience, and there have been other experiences that have happened since because of that.

"But we are called to prepare this land for the New Jerusalem." And he turned again to Hall's America's Secret Destiny, asking whether we had all read Washington's Vision. He explained that the vision is a very prophetic experience that George Washington had of three different events that would take place - the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and another war to come later. Hall's work reports an event that occurred when General McClellan was in charge of the northern army during the Civil War, and Brother Hagenson said, "I want you to listen to this." And he read:

McClellan's Vision

"The southern army was now pressing into Washington D.C. and was about to capture Washington. This was a dream, and also General McClellan believes it was a vision, too. 'March 8, 1862. General McClellan's career as a soldier was not exceptionally brilliant. He was a good organizer, but with many enemies, because of certain fixations of temperament. There can be no question of his sincerity and his dedication to the cause of the Union. In the interests of brevity, here we will give a digest of parts of the story of the dream, with the General's own words preserved in more significant passages.' Jack remarked as an aside, "Now you are going to be surprised at what I am about to tell you, but it's no different than what happened in the Old State Hall when a heavenly visitor came." 'At two o'clock of the third night after General McClellan's arrival at Washington, D. C. to take command of the United States Army, he was working over his maps and studying the reports of the scouts. A feeling of intense weariness came over him, and leaning his forehead on his folded arms, he fell asleep at his table.

"He had not been sleeping more than ten minutes when it seemed that the locked door of his room was suddenly thrown open, someone stood up to him and a voice, terrible with power spoke. 'General McMlellan, you sleep at your post! Rouse you, or err it can be prevented the foe will be in Washington.' The General then describes in some detail his strange feelings. At the moment he seemed to be suspended in the center of infinite space, and the voice came from a hollow distance all about him. He started up, but whether he was really awake he was never able to decide. The table covered with maps was still before him, but the furniture, the walls of the room and other familiar objects were no longer visible. Instead, he was gazing upon a living map including the entire area of the country from the Mississippi River to the Atlantic Coast. McClellan tried to see the features of the being that stood with him, but could discern nothing but a vapor having a general outline of a man.

“As he looked upon the great map, McClellan was amazed to see the movements of various troops and regiments and a complete pattern of the enemies lines and distributions of forces. The general was immediately infused with a great elation; for he felt that the movement on this extraordinary map would enable him to bring the war to a speedy and victorious termination. Then his elation changed to great apprehension. He saw the enemy’s forces moving to certain points which he himself had intended to occupy within the next few days. He quietly realized that in some way, his plans were known to the enemy. Then again the voice spoke, ‘General McClellan, you have been betrayed, and had not God willed it otherwise, ere the sun of tomorrow had set, the Confederate flag would have waved above the capitol and your own grave. Note what you see. Your time is short.’

“With pencil moving with speed of thought, McClellan transferred the troop positions from the living map to the paper maps on his desk. When this had been done, McClellan became aware that the figure standing near him had increased in light and glory until it shone like a noon day sun. And as he raised his eyes, he looked into the face of George Washington. The first President, with sublime and gentle dignity looked upon the bewildered officer and spoke with power the following. ‘General McClellan, while yet in the flesh, I beheld the birth of the American Republic. It was indeed a hard and bloody one, but God’s blessing was upon the nation; and therefore, through this, in its first struggle for existence, He sustained her and with his mighty hand, brought her out triumphantly. A century has now passed since then, yet the child Republic has taken her position, a peer with nations whose pages of history extend for ages in the past. She has, since those dark days, by the favor of God greatly prospered. And now, by very reason of this prosperity has she been brought to her second great struggle. ‘This is by far the most perilous ordeal she has to endure. Passing is she from childhood to opening maturity.’ (Notice how the messenger, George Washington now an angelic being, is speaking about this country going from childhood to maturity.) ‘She is called on to accomplish that vast result, self conquest - to learn that important lesson, self control, self rule that in the future will place her in the band of power in civilization. But her mission will not then be finished; For ere another century shall have gone by, the oppressors of the whole earth - (Sound familiar now, Brothers and Sisters? This is the next century.) ‘hating and envying her exaltation, shall join themselves together and raise up their hands against her. But if she still be found worthy of her high calling, they shall surely be discomfited. Then will be ended her third and last great struggle for existence. Henceforth shall the Republic go on,’ (I believe this is talking all about Zion here. Brother Jack declares.) ‘increasing in power and goodness until her borders shall end only in the remotest corners of the earth.’ (Zion going into all the earth.) ‘And the whole earth shall, beneath her shadowing wings become a universal republic.’ (The Kingdom of God! That’s my word - the Kingdom of God!) ‘Let her in her prosperity, however, remember the Lord, her God. Her trust be always in Him, and she shall never be confounded.’

“As the spirit visitor ceased speaking, he raised his hand over McClellan’s head in blessing. In the next instant, a peel of thunder rumbled through space. McClellan awoke with a start. He was again in his room with his maps spread out on the table before him, but there was one thing different. The maps were covered with the marks, signs and figures which he had inscribed there during the vision. McClellan walked about the room to convince himself that

he was really awake. He then returned and looked at the maps. The markings were still there. Convinced now that the experience was heaven sent, McClellan had his horse saddled and he rode from camp to camp making the necessary changes in strategy to meet the enemy’s planned offensive. His moves were successful, and he prevented the capture of the city of Washington. At that time, the Confederate army was close, so close that Abraham Lincoln, sitting in his study at the Whitehouse, could hear the rumble of the Confederate Army’s artillery. General McClellan concludes his account of the strange vision that saved the Union with these words, ‘Our beloved George Washington shall again rest quietly, sweetly in his tomb until perhaps, the end of the prophetic century approaches that is to bring the republic to a third and final struggle when he may once again ... become a messenger of succor and peace from the great ruler who has all the nations of the earth in His keeping.

“But the future is too vast for our comprehension. We are the children of the present. When peace shall again have folded her bright wings and settled upon our land, the strange and earthy map marked while the spirit eyes of Washington looked down, shall be preserved among the American archives as a precious reminder to the American nation of what is their second great struggle for existence they owe to God and the glorified spirit of Washington. Verily, the works of God are above the understanding of man.’

“And the reason why I bring that to you is because we are involved in a much greater war than we find in Iraq. Each one of you is it at school as a witness for Jesus Christ. As professors at Graceland, as a mechanic in the workshop, or a mother at a kitchen sink, or a newspaper man, Brother Alan, whatever your task is, the Lord has called us into this holy work. And out of that the great and last struggle, the glory of Zion shall emerge. This nation, I am willing to say in the name of Jesus Christ in very strong words, will be hated in the near future as no other nation has been hated.

“When I was a youngster in the Second World War, a hundred miles from our home there were shells that came from the Japanese ships on our west coast. God kept those foreign nations off of our land at that time. but I believe there was a reason why the Lord has stayed His hand.

“When I was in Detroit recently, I looked north and told my companion in travel, ‘America is the same.’ He says, ‘What do you mean?’ I said, ‘There is McDonalds. There’s Hardees, There’s Wal Mart. You know you can go right down the line and name all of these things. No wonder, when one company goes broke, how it affects the whole nation. And I felt by the Spirit and I said to my companion, ‘But we have the same national sins. We have the same national sins!’

Our speaker spoke of the economic advantages the construction business has being largely locally owned and noted that our branches are likewise locally owned, each branch functioning in its community to bring about the Kingdom of God? “We are engaged in a war far greater than any physical war that you can ever imagine. We are engaged in a spiritual war, but praise God, praise God! Greater is He that is within you than he that is in the world! And Zion will come to pass.

“I’m going to close with this testimony, not mine but of a friend of mine, Brother Danny Friend. When we first gathered in from Washington to Independence, Lois, who is a hundred and ten pounds dripping wet, came down with a disease. Her legs were swollen up like this (and he demonstrated great distention). Her skin was stretched tight. She was on medication trying to help out

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Youth Continue to Achieve

and we called Danny Friend. He came to our home, administered to Lois, and pronounced that she was healed. I went to get Danny a drink. As we walked from the bedroom to the kitchen to get the drink, I turned and there was Lois, who had been in bed for three days, walking behind us. And she said, 'You know, I had to believe that if I was healed, I had to get out of bed.' With every step that she took, her legs got smaller, and she has never had that problem again. Danny was a medical corpsman in the army in the Second World War. His task was to go out and pick up the wounded. During the final stages of the war in Germany, Danny heard a young man who had been shot in the stomach crying for help, went out, picked him up and started carrying him back to the field hospital. The soldier said, 'I've got a letter that I've written in case something like this would happen. I want you to send the letter to my parents in Texas.' Danny kept assuring the young man that he wasn't going to die, even though he was sure that he would.

"When he got back almost to the hospital, the young man said some very strange words. He said, 'Could you call for the Elders for me?' Danny said, 'Buddy, what church do you belong to?' He said, 'The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.' Danny said, 'Well, Buddy, I belong to the same church.' The Chaplain searched the records, and there were no Elders listed, but for some reason he asked, 'Do you have any churches here in Germany?' Danny wasn't sure but he thought we had something there. For some reason, the Chaplain said, 'Let's go down to the prison camp. There may be an Elder there.' (See how the Lord works?) They went down to the prison camp and there was a German Elder there. They got permission, put him in chains, loaded him in a jeep, brought him back to the hospital, and he administered to that young man. Can you imagine, Brothers of the Eldership, administering with chains on your hands and shackles on your feet? The interpreter told him later that he was told that he would be healed, would return home and do a great work in the church and the kingdom. Danny had the privilege of taking that young man to the plane a few days later, and they communicated for several years. He became a pastor and was one of the real leaders in the State of Texas.

"But the best part is yet to come. A German Elder, a prisoner of war, from communicating through the translator, knew that Danny was a member of his church, and as he shook Danny's hand when he got out of the jeep to go back to the prison camp, his last words, in German, were, 'I'll see you in Zion.' I'll see you in Zion! Isn't that our calling - to share Jesus Christ - the hope that we have in Him - that people everywhere will be able to say to each other, 'I'll see you in Zion'!

Cessaries Galusha was seen on Iowa Public Television twice during April. She won the privilege of performing by competing in the Terrace Hill (Iowa's Governor's residence) piano competition. Cessaries placed second in the competition, the same standing Nathan Smith of the Mount Ayr congregation achieved when he was in high school. Cessaries and Amy Mohler presented their Senior Recital at Graceland's Shaw Center on April 13 demonstrating their several musical achievements in piano, violin, flute and voice. Galusha has been invited to come to Terrace Hill, the governor's mansion in Des Moines, to play for a party there.

Heidee Winkler was a member of the academic Bowl team that placed second in recent competition. She and Brandy Anderson ran pretty much neck and neck representing their respective high schools in track and field competition, with Heidee placing first and Brandi second in a number of events.

Heidee was inducted into the National Honor Society April 21. Members of the society exhibit outstanding qualities in leadership, service and character and carry a grade point of at least 3.6.

Dan Martwick received his Eagle Scout award April 27 at the Presbyterian church in Creston, Iowa. The congregations congratulate Dan on this notable achievement.

African Saints Visit Mount Ayr

Brother Sam and Sister Judith Agwanda of Kisumu, Kenya, East Africa, spent the week of April 14-21 with the Mtount Ayr Saints. Elder Agwanda, who is the Presiding Elder of the Kenyan Saints, spoke to the congregation during the Church School hour on Easter Sunday. He reported that the political situation in Kenya has just changed for the better, and he anticipates that the church will now be registered in that nation. Registration was formally requested a number of years ago, but the request has never been heard. Because of the request, the meetings of the Saints are not illegal, but they are not permitted to set up a bank account, own property, etc. There are ten groups of Saints meeting now, all of whom currently have local Priesthood with the exception of one, and more Priesthood calls are being processed.

The Book of Mormon has been translated into Luo and Swahili languages and will soon be in print in those languages. Retreats and reunions have been the means of giving the people of the area instruction and encouragement. Women especially have learned that they have a vital part to play in the church. Now they are anticipating the ministry of a large contingent of youth preparing to travel there from the Centerplace this summer. Brother Agwanda bore testimony of ways in which the Lord is moving to make possible the growth of the work in Kenya, and expressed the appreciation of the Kenyan Saints for the ministry provided them by members of the Mount Ayr congregation.

The people of Kenya have been made poor by the adverse political climate under which they have lived. Now they have great hope for the future. Already one of the members has donated land for a rice project that is underway in Ohero, and there are plans for a credit union through which many may receive loans with which to start achieving greater financial stability.

On a previous visit to the United States, Brother Agwanda visited the Mount. Ayr congregation. The Agwandas are the

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parents of Pamela Odida who lived for a time in Lamoni while her husband attended Graceland University and they worshipped with us.

Easter Celebration Includes Community Lenten Breakfast

As is customary, the congregation took its turn assisting with the Ministerial Association's Lenten Breakfasts this season. Each morning of the week before Easter the community gathers at the Christian Church shortly after 6:00 am, for an hour of breakfast and worship before going to work. We take our turn with cleanup and resetting the tables for the next day's activity. The services are attended by some 130 to 200 persons each day.

The congregation held its own Easter Breakfast as a part of its Easter celebration, too. Eighty five people were present for the services.

New Audio Equipment Installed

Elder Mark Allen of the Odessa, Missouri Restoration Branch installed new speakers, microphones, etc. to upgrade the audio capabilities of the congregation. Easter services found greater clarity both in the building and in the tape recordings from the use of the roving and hand held microphones as well as from the fixed microphone and new speakers.

Memorial Service Held for Friend of the Congregation

A memorial Service was held Sunday, April 27 at the Decatur City Restoration Branch for Elder Henry Bollinger who died April 25. Brother Bollinger will be remembered especially for his contributions to the reunions and retreats the two congregations have shared.