

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

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Some Assembly Required

There are few words that strike fear in the hearts of most parents when they read the instructions on the box, "some assembly required." We don't seem to have the right tools, the instructions are confusing, or perhaps, we simply can't understand English. Yet, if we persevere, we have the satisfaction of building something that endures and is of great joy to our children.

There is something that is going to happen next year that will require an assembly. In this case, a lot of people are being asked to assemble to worship, to pray and to consider something, which if it endures, will bring great joy to the children of the kingdom. Our Patriarchs have called us to assemble. We can respond in many ways.

- 1). We don't want anything to do if some assembly is required.
- 2). We can accuse the "theys" of being up to something which we don't like.
- 3). We can say that it is impossible to get that many people together. No place is big enough, or equipped well enough.
- 4). We can respond to the call in obedience to the counsel given in II Chronicles 7:14.
Which will it be?

TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

Acknowledge God in All Things

Elder Gerald Bolingbroke opened his sermon for the September Sacrament of the Lord's Supper by commenting on the beautiful song which had just been sung by Diane Anderson. The song set the mood for meditation and worship throughout the congregation.

He then continued by reading from Matthew 26:13-26: "Now on the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, the disciples came unto Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus appointed them; and they made ready the passover. Now when the evening was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and brake it, and blessed it, and gave to his disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is in remembrance of my body which I give a ransom for you. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it. For this is in remembrance of my blood of the new testament, which is shed for as many as shall believe on my name, for the remission of their sins. And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall observe to do the things which ye have seen me do, and bear record of me even unto the end. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall come and drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

The Meaning of the Sacrament

Brother Bolingbroke continued his talk by explaining that the words "new testament" are used in the scripture from Matthew, and they are also recorded in Mark, Luke, and Paul. The Lord's Supper could be thought of as a "new passover" or "new covenant". The Lord made a covenant with the house of Israel on Mount Sinai. Israel did not live up to that covenant so Jeremiah prophesied of a time to come when the Lord would make a "new covenant" with Israel. Jesus fulfilled that prophecy when He introduced the communion service.

The second meaning of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper includes the idea of sacrifice. Under the Mosaic Law, Israel was told

to sacrifice the paschal lamb. This was a lamb without blemish. Its meat was eaten with unleavened bread. Jesus was the paschal lamb, sacrificed for the sins of man. Because of that sacrifice, we can be forgiven of our sins and start anew. He is also calling us to sacrifice for others.

In the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 59:5, we find these words: “And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments.” This scripture tells us that we offend God if we don’t confess His hand in all things and if we don’t obey His commandments.

This is a marvelous age in which we live. By means of advanced technology which has existed only within the past several decades, scientists have been able to observe and understand the universe to a greater extent than ever before. Brother Bolingbroke shared with us some things in which he sees God’s hand in the creation of the universe.

First, he asked us to consider the Moon. Our Moon is slowly moving away from the Earth. At this time in history the Moon is the right distance so that the angular size of the Moon and the Sun are the same. This means that the Moon can completely block the Sun during a total solar eclipse. But it does not block the solar atmosphere. The Moon has one of the roundest measured profiles in the sky of any planetary body in the Solar System. The Moon also stabilizes the tilt of the Earth’s rotation axis. In other words, the most habitable place in the Solar System yields the best view of solar eclipses just when observers can best appreciate them.

Earth as a Recording Device

The surface of the Earth is itself a complex data logging system. There are many ways that the mysteries of the creation can be understood. What makes the Earth an ideal device is its active, recycling and cyclical rhythms on time scales from hours to eons. Let us look at a few examples.

Growth rings in trees give us information on the amount of precipitation and mean temperature for a given season and also serve as an important dating tool via their carbon 14 content which is used for dating the age of the tree. Tree rings serve a unique tool for measuring the carbon 14 content of the atmosphere, which is modulated by the sunspot cycle. The carbon 14 content gives us information on solar variations on time scales from decades to millennia, many years in the past.

Another example can be found in the deposit of snow and ice in Greenland and Antarctica, which creates a record of the composition of the atmosphere going back four hundred thousand years. From ice cores, many environmental parameters such as gases in trapped air bubbles, dust levels, the global water cycle, and aerosol concentration can be observed. All of these help us understand what the atmosphere was like thousands of years ago.

Time scales recorded on the ocean floor go back even farther, to hundreds of millions of years. Scientists now know that there is a mid-ocean ridge, which is a large crack in the surface of the Earth far beneath the ocean. This ridge goes nearly around the world. It is through this ridge that new lava can flow upward and onto the ocean floor. As it seeps out, it pushes older lava outward away from the ridge. The youngest sediments are located at the opening of the mid-ocean ridge, where new sea floor is produced from upwelling molten rock from the hot mantle below.

Also, at the time the lava is becoming solid, the iron, which is within the molten lava, reacts with Earth’s natural magnetic field. As the sea floor spreads away from the mid-ocean ridge, the

magnetic field in the sea floor varies. Oceanographers have learned how to read the ancient fluctuations of the Earth’s magnetic field. These variations are evidence that the magnetic poles of the Earth slowly change throughout time. Earth is the only planet we know that is capable of keeping such records. It is remarkable that something so subtle and so unnoticed in everyday life is so reliably recorded and preserved. It is also remarkable that we can extract this information so easily.

In the Doctrine and Covenants Sec 85:12 the Lord tells us, “The earth rolls upon her wings; and the sun giveth his light by day, and the moon giveth her light by night; and the stars also giveth their light, as they roll upon their wings, in their glory, in the midst of the power of God.” And in Section 85:12b-d we find, “Unto what shall I liken these kingdoms, that ye may understand? Behold, all these are kingdoms, and any man who hath seen any or the least of these, hath seen God moving in his majesty and power. I say unto you, He hath seen him: nevertheless, he who came unto his own was not comprehended.

Moving on to the Sun, it is notable that its spectrum (the light it gives off) contains a wealth of information about its composition, surface temperature, and surface gravity, among other quantities. This is not a feature unique to the Sun or to solar-like stars, but the Sun’s spectrum and other similar stars are nearly optimal in terms of measurability and the number of chemical elements whose abundance can be accurately determined from it. The solar spectrum is a nearly perfect compromise between the density of absorption lines and integrity of the continuum. The transparency of the atmosphere in those wavelengths of light containing most of the Sun’s radiant energy allows astronomers not only solar observations but also the observation of stars and radiant sources in the universe. The Earth has an atmosphere with a thickness sufficient to support complex life but not so thick as to be unclear, so astronomers can see the galaxies and other bodies in the sky. Our Milky Way Galaxy is a spiral galaxy with many arms. The Sun is located “between” spiral arms of our Galaxy, at this time in history. If it was “in” a spiral arm, astronomers would not be able to see the other galaxies because of the dust and gas in the spiral arms.

The Cosmic Background Radiation

Astronomers have been able to get information on the Big Bang theory of Creation by analyzing the Cosmic Background Radiation. This radiation is now in the microwave region of the spectrum, which makes it easy to measure. In many years it will be in a longer wave which will be harder to measure.

Our tides are caused by the pull of gravity of the moon on the Earth. Ancient tidal sedimentation layers called “tidalites” and coral, mollusk, and stromatolite growth layers record the lunar (moon) and solar (sun) tidal cycles, giving us unique data on the length of the lunar month (how long it takes the moon to go around the Earth once) and of the terrestrial (Earth) day in ancient times. For instance, such data tell us that 500 million years ago the length of a day was about 20 hours and length of a lunar month was 27.5 present days, not 30.5 days as it is today.

Evidence suggests that the universe was designed not only for human habitability but also for human measurability and comprehensibility. The universe was designed not only for humans to live, but also for humans to be able to measure and understand creation and time. And why would Someone place us in a time and place that gives us easy access to so much information about our universe? Romans 1:20 gives us the answer, “For God hath revealed unto them the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world,

which are clearly seen; things which are not seen being understood by the things that are made, through his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”

And also in the Doctrine and Covenants Sec 85:21 we find, “And I give unto you a commandment, that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom; teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that is expedient for you to understand; of things both in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth; things which have been; things which are; things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home; things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations; and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries, and of kingdoms, that ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again, to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you.”

We see how God has prepared this time as the best time for scientists to observe the Earth, Moon, and Universe. Brother Bolingbroke concluded his sermon by encouraging us to keep the commandments of God and acknowledge Him in all things.

The Rocks Cry Out

Luke 19:36-39 was read by Seventy Ronald Smith as he introduced his sermon on Sunday, September 14. “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 loud voices, for all the mighty works that 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.” The reading was followed by the congregation singing, Rock of Ages, cleft for me. Let me hide myself in thee.”

“Today we are going to be talking about rocks”, Brother Smith announced after calling attention to the scripture, the song and the earlier call to worship. “You know the Bible was written in a land in which rocks are much more prevalent than they are here. Wherever you look, you see stones and rocks. There are hundreds of references to rocks or stones in the Bible. Lots of times God was compared to The Rock and Jesus was the Rock of Our Salvation. Jesus compared Himself to the Corner Stone and in prophecy, He was called The Head of The Corner.”

Our speaker then turned to a recent experience in which he thought of the story of the time Jesus was told that His disciples should not call Him the King and should not worship Him because that was not proper. But Jesus said, if they would hold their peace, the very stones would cry out and sing praises to Him. “A lot of you have heard this testimony, but some of you haven’t, so I am going to share it again. This is about when Michael Jordison and I were coming back from the Navajo Nation in Arizona and the Navajo Reunion. I had seen the sign to Los Lunas, New Mexico, by Albuquerque when we were driving by; and it clicked in my mind that several years ago, when I was in Colorado on a missionary trip, I had met a man who said he had been down to Los Lunas and had seen this stone that had the Ten Commandments written on it in Hebrew. I thought that would be fun to go see.”

“As we were planning our return trip from the Reunion,

Michael said he would like to go and see the Grand Canyon, but when we consulted the map, we learned it would take an extra day to get there and back. We thought we might follow the Rolfe’s through the mountains up Denver way and see the scenery, but we had spent lots of prayers getting our RV, which we called Ben Done (like Ben Hur only Done instead of Hur), through the small mountain pass above Albuquerque, so thought we probably shouldn’t risk the seven thousand plus heights that would have been necessary going that way. So I mentioned that we could go to Los Lunas and see the stone. Michael agreed.

“We got to Los Lunas in the evening, went to a Chilis restaurant and asked the waitress where we might find the stone. She said, “I have been here for ten years and I have never heard of such a thing. I am a Christian, and if there was such a thing here, I am sure I probably would have heard of it.’ So, making a long story short, we went to sleep out on the mountain side and prayed that the Lord would help us find this thing.

“We came back into town in the morning and went to the Walmart super center because there was a MacDonalds there and Michael suggested that there would be an old timer coming to MacDonalds for breakfast that we could ask. So we watched the greeters at Walmart and watched the people who came in to MacDonalds, and nobody was old. It was no use, so I suggested we go to the public library because I knew that back in the twenties or thirties there had been some people from the University of New Mexico who had come down to investigate this stone. I knew there would be an article in the newspaper or something about it. So we asked how to get to the library. The library opened at nine o’clock and it was still seven o’clock in the morning. That might be why no old timers had come to MacDonalds yet.

“We had a couple of hours to kill, and there was a MacDonalds sign within seeing distance, a couple of blocks away, so we decided to go get some breakfast. We got our breakfast, sat down, and had our prayer. We both prayed, actually, over our food out loud, and I said, ‘Lord, if it wouldn’t be too much trouble, it would sure be nice if there was someone who could just show us where this thing is instead of having to do a wild goose chase all day looking for it.’ We finished our prayer and started eating.

“There was a gentleman sitting right across the aisle from us. He wasn’t reading his paper and he hadn’t ordered any breakfast. He was just sitting there and Michael started a conversation with him. He said, ‘I noticed that you were both praying. Are you Christian?’ When we said, ‘yes’, he said, “I’m a Pastor of a group here in town. Where have you been?” So we got to tell him that we had been to the Navajo Nation in Arizona and had taught classes at a Reunion.’ He said, ‘I worked with the Indians in my younger days. Where are you going?’ We told him we were going back home to Iowa. I said, ‘The only reason we came down here is because we heard about this stone that has The Ten Commandments written on it in Hebrew. Of course some people think it’s a fake.’ He said, ‘OH, no! It’s not a fake! I’ve been there.’

“We said, ‘You have?’ He said, ‘Yes. It’s been some time but people still go there. I’ve got a friend who knows the way. Are you interested in going?’ We said, ‘Sure! We would love to go!’ He asked for a phone. Michael gave him his cell phone and he called his friend. I couldn’t hear all of the conversation but after he was done, he says, ‘We can go right now.’

“We finished our breakfast and followed him outside. We went to our camper, and I don’t know if he looked at our camper before he offered to take us out there, but he said, ‘Why don’t you bring

your RV over and park it at the church and we'll take the church van.' We parked at the church, got in this little van and went to pick up his friend. On the way, he says, 'The air conditioner is not working very well in this van. Let's use my personal van.' So after we got his friend, we came back to the church where his home was and we got into the most lush van I have ever been in. It had green velour upholstery. There was a television, and in the back was a bed. This was something, and all we had asked for was a guide!

Los Lunas Stone Found

"Our host, Fred Kerns, got bottles of water out of his house because there was a walk to take. His friend was a pastor of a group there named John. John had a book with him called Discovery of the Americas which tells about the stone and the mountain it is on. It says that the stone was first discovered in 1880 by the white man on this place which was called Hidden or Mystery Mountain by the white man, but by the Indians it was called The Mountain (or Cliff) of the Inscriptions. So the Indians had known about it for a long time.

"We talked about it all the way out and found that on the top on this mountain there are some ruins of buildings - foundation stones of buildings, and that there is an inscription in Hebrew on the very highest point that says, 'Yahweh is the Almighty God'. We found that the stones are on the Isletta Indian Reserve out in the middle of the desert. There's a kind of a big, bowl shaped crater that is miles across. In the middle there are two cinder cones, and on top of one of the cinder cones is the kind of hollowed out place where there was a camp the book said was laid out like a Roman military camp.

"We got out at the base of the mountain and took about a three quarter of a mile walk around the base, went through a fence, up a dry wash. About a quarter of the way up, there was this huge stone - a basalt boulder with the Ten Commandments in Paleo Hebrew. We learned that Paleo Hebrew refers to the characters that were used to write Hebrew before the Babylonian captivity. (If you recall, Lehi left Jerusalem just before the Babylonian captivity. He would have written in Paleo Hebrew.) These letters were kind of like block letters when you compare them to the modern Hebrew which is a more cursive kind of script. The modern letters were used after they came back from the Babylonian captivity.

"You have seen the pictures we took of the stone and us there. (See Michael's report in the August issue of the Newsletter.) We talked about going to the top then, but Fred had just had quadruple bypass surgery and his friend was amazed that he had even come on the walk with us out in the desert where it was over a hundred degrees, and really dry. So we went back and got our RV. I looked at Michael and said, 'You're are not thinking of going back to the top, are you?' And Michael said, 'Of course!'

"So we went back. This was noon time, and we met some people who had been there since six o'clock in the morning. Before we had come, they had started searching for the stone and had missed it all day, and they didn't have any water with them. They had lost their two older children, aged 21 and 23, who were somewhere around the mountain. They were going back to get some water for them and said if we met them to let them know. We met them just before we got to the dry wash and told them they weren't very far from being back to where they started, gave them some water and sent them on their way.

"We went to the top and had a little worship service, but the thing that I thanked the Lord for was that it seemed to me that the rocks were crying out in praises to the Lord. In these days when we are agonizing over having the Ten Commandments in a Court

House or wherever, the Lord had them planted out there in the desert a long, long time ago; and they are still there for anybody to see that wants to come and see them. And you know that there were people there in the past - in the distant past - who believed in God and who praised the Lord in that desolate spot. Isn't that just like God to choose a spot like that? And it is desolate. It's miles from anywhere - about twenty miles from Los Lunas - and there's no water in any place close except in the canyon that is right beside it. It's a desolate spot, but very beautiful, I am sure, in the eyes of the Lord.

Rocks - Bringing Out the Beauty

"I was going to talk about stones - rocks - today, and I brought some. I was a rock collector as a little kid, and Dad helped me make a tray that I could put my rocks in. I don't know what's happened to that over the years, but I went to my brother Steve who had some rocks I could show you. This first rock doesn't look like too much." Ron showed us just a dark colored, rough rock. "But if you cut it with a rock saw," he turned the rock around to show a beautiful surface of geometric patterns and varied color, on the inside you see all of the beauty that's there waiting to be seen.' With that, he started a couple of pieces around the congregation for our inspection.

"I have another one here. It looks pretty ugly, right? But this is a piece of obsidian. If you strike obsidian hard enough, it will shatter. This is like volcanic glass. That glass shines and you can do some amazing things with it." Ron turned the rock so we could see the beautiful shiny surface and passed the rock into the congregation.)

"I have another little one. I don't have a before and after on this one. This was a regular little stone that was put into a rock tumbler. A rock tumbler is a thing that goes around and around and around. You have a bunch of sand and stuff in there and it wears the rock down - wears off the outside, and when it gets all done, it's nice and smooth and it's kind of pretty! That's a neat little rock!" (This rock followed the others into the congregation.)

The next rock Brother Smith kept on the podium so he could refer to it as he spoke. "It's a little bit odd to think of rocks thinking or speaking, whatever. Jesus said they would cry out, and I will talk about that a little bit more later. But, if I was a rock. Think of yourself as a rock, Sam." Ron pointed out a Kindergartner intently watching the proceedings, "if you were a rock, would you ask to get put in a tumbler so you could get tumbled around and all the outside would get chipped off and flattened out and smoothed off? Probably not. If you were a rock, would you ask to get hit so hard that you would just shatter like that piece of obsidian? Probably not. If you were a rock, you probably wouldn't ask to get put through the saw so that would bring out the beauty inside.

"Well, I think we are kind of like rocks sometimes. We don't always choose to go through the things in life that we go through, but God knows what's best for us and He often puts us through the tumbler. And that's the way that the beauty comes out. When you look at those stones real close, the pretty part is where there was a flaw in the stone. That's how the beauty comes out in stones. We are kind of like that. We wouldn't choose the method for bringing out the beauty in us that sometimes gets chosen; but God is the maker and He knows us. Sometimes we go through those kinds of things.

"I've been thinking of my dad. Some of you haven't been over to see Dad. There's not a lot of incentive to go do that. But we've gone over several times and I take the guitar over and Dad - you

know he has had those strokes and kind of stroked out most of his brain, so he doesn't talk coherently much at all, and he doesn't recognize people. If you go and hold his hand, he will be appreciative, but he doesn't know who is holding his hand a lot of the time. Sometimes he does. But when you sing to him, he will whistle. You guys all know that he whistled for a long time in here. He can whistle all the hymns - all the tunes. Isn't that just like God? When you take everything away, he can still whistle the tunes and remember the hymns! I've thought, what would I be like if God took everything away from me and was just going to leave one thing, what would it be? Would it be the remembrance of hymn tunes? I've seen people over at the nursing home at Lamoni for a long time, and sometimes that happens to people. Pretty much everything is taken away, and sometimes what is left isn't very nice, even if they have been nice people all their lives. So I have been thankful that God would leave that with Dad.

"That's kind of like the stones. At first we were praying, 'Lord heal Dad.' Then we got to the point where we were all praying, 'Lord, take him quickly. He's not doing much good like this. Take him quickly.' then Norman said that the Lord spoke to him and asked, 'What makes you think that you know more about him than I do?' So we are praying that God's will might be done and that whatever the Lord wants will happen. And there have been people whose lives have been touched because Dad has been there, and Dad has opportunities to witness. Mom has shared testimonies about those kind of things. So we don't know what's going to happen, but we know that he is in the Lord's hands.

Jesus Quotes Habakkuk

"Going back to the story where Jesus was saying that the stones would cry out, Jesus was quoting a scripture. Jesus did that a lot. The prophecy is actually in Habakkuk, in the second chapter. I'm just going to read verses 11 and 14 and leave it to you, if you want to do so, to go back and get the context of these. It says, 'For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it. ... For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.' Habakkuk was talking about the need for people to repent. He was telling them, 'You build your high house. The Lord has allowed you to have this city and your security, and all of these things, and what have you done with it? You covet, you ...' Then he names lots of nasty, filthy things that people do. He says, you have 'consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and have sinned against thy soul.' But he says, 'The stone itself will cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it. Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city in iniquity.' He goes on to talk about all of the bad things that people have done, but then he assures them that, 'The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.'

"So when Jesus was talking to the Pharisees, they were trying to get Him to shut these people up. 'Stop them from saying that You are the Lord! Stop them from calling You King! Make them stop praising You!' They had taken a donkey, put their clothes on the donkey, put their coats in front of it so the donkey could walk over them. They were shouting that Jesus was the King and fulfilling the prophecies that said that was the way the King would come to Jerusalem, and the Pharisees said, 'Stop them!' But Jesus said, 'No! The earth is going to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. You guys should know this, and here I am!'

"In these days, we often get told not to proclaim Jesus - not to put up Ten Commandments - not to do anything that would offend

someone because of our belief. But Jesus said, 'If you don't do it, the stones themselves will cry out in praise to God.' And we need to be aware of that.

"We also need to be aware that this was a call to repentance. If Jesus is our rock - if God is our Savior as we sing about, as we talk about - as the scriptures speak about Him - if that is where we go, then we need to repent. We need to do the things that Jesus has asked us to do. We need to stop talking about our sister-in-law and saying the bad things that she does. We need to stop fighting with our brother or sister - and Sam, our speaker addressed the attentive child again, 'I'm sure you never fight with your sister, right? Well you need to stop that if you do. And the older ones of us, too. I can get away with calling your name, Sam, but if I call somebody else's name, I might not get away with it'.

"There was a situation that Di and I got ourselves into one time. We went to a congregation for awhile. We didn't know it, but the Pastor was beating his wife. I'm not saying that is happening in his congregation - Rob. 'But Rob, if you are beating your wife, you need to stop it'. If you are beating your kids, you need to stop it! As the Book of Mormon says, we can't tell you all of the ways that you can sin. But you need to think about the things that you do - your words, your actions, your thoughts. And you need to make sure that those are centered on God so that, if nothing else, when everything else goes away, and there's only one thing left, it will be centered on the Lord. We need to, in George's (Knotts) immortal words, 'Repent early and avoid the rush!'

Jesus Gives Us a Choice

"Because Jesus says that He's the head of the corner, we have two choices. We can either choose to build on the corner stone or we can be crushed by it. We can either build on that foundation stone or we will be crushed by it. We need to recognize that Jesus is our Lord and our Savior, even this day. And I hope that as you consider the rocks around you, you will understand that Jesus loves you even more than He loves one of these rocks. And the beauty that's inside you, even with the flaws and the things that seem so terrible to us, He can bring the beauty out. And He will if we will repent and allow His work to be done in our life. And if we will earnestly seek first to build up the kingdom of God, then here is what He says can happen to us:

"This is Isaiah 54, starting with verse ten. It says, 'For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my people be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates and thy gates of carbuncles and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established; thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear; and from terror; for it shall not come near thee. Behold, they shall surely gather together against thee, but not by me; whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.'

"So, as we go from here today, we need to know that we don't have to be afraid of terror. We don't have to fear, because God will

establish us in righteousness if we let Him. His covenant will not be removed. God will take care of you. We need to be like that rock and be willing to go through the tumbler or whatever it takes to bring forth the beauty. May God bless you all.

In closing, Michael, who was in charge of the service, made a brief comment concerning the Ten Commandment stone. He said: "Ron left out a little bit of the story on the second pastor that we met - John. When Fred was explaining his friend to us, he said, 'Oh, Yeah, and John reads Hebrew. So John was able to go up there and actually read for us word for word from that rock! Section 10 compares rocks with the gospel. Let's sing about what we have found. We sang, 'I have found the Glorious Gospel that was taught in former years.'" High Priest Sherman Phipps pronounced a Pastoral benediction on us all with a special prayer for Delbert Smith.

Keeping the Commandments - Our Way of Expressing Love

After expressing pleasure at being permitted "to share those things that are most important to me, and the things that are on my heart," Elder Douglas D. Smith read Luke 1: 17. An angel was talking to Zacharias about his son John the Baptist, telling him what John was going to do. "It says, 'And he shall go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.' This morning I pray that our time together will be in that same Spirit and that we can understand a little more of what it means to be a people prepared for the Lord." "When Jesus was talking to His disciples (Luke 6:46), he asked them a question that I think is a very good question for each and every one of us today. That is, 'Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?' Jesus said, he didn't just want people to call Him their Lord. He wanted us to do what He said. He doesn't want us to just believe in Him. He wants us to obey Him. When the chief Priests and Elders who were pretending to be righteous came to Jesus, as recorded in Matthew 21:26-30, He ended up telling them this parable: 'What think ye? A man had two sons; and he came to the first, saying, Son, go work today in my vineyard He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I will serve; and went not. Whether of these twain did the will of their father? They say unto him, The first.' Jesus doesn't want us to give Him lip service. He wants us to give Him service. God doesn't want your words. He wants your heart.

"You know, the only people that Jesus was hard with were the hypocrites. What did He say to the sinners? He said, 'I am come that you may have life!' But what did He say to the hypocrites, 'Depart from me into outer darkness where there is going to be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.' So often we feel obligated to put on some kind of a show. You know, if I come to church every Sunday, and if I look like I am good and don't tell anybody that there's sin in my life, you know what they call me? They call me stalwart. But if I come to church and there's some hint that there may be something wrong - that maybe I'm not doing something that I ought to be doing, you know what they call me - a backslider. So what does Jesus want? Does He want honesty and obedience or does He want

pretense and lies?

God Loves You Too Much To Leave You As You Are

"The Lord loves you just as you are, and He loves you right where you are. He loves you with any sin that you have in your life, and He loves you with a love that can't be shaken. So don't ever doubt that the Lord loves you, but He loves you too much to leave you where you are. He doesn't not love you because of the stain and the sin and the mud that's in your life because you are down in the gutter. But He loves you too much just to leave you there. He wants to take you home with Him! He wants to wash you up. He wants to change who you are and what you are into someone who can be prepared to meet His Father.

"As Paul says in Ephesians 5:8-10, 'For ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of Light; For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth; proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.' The Lord wants you to walk as a child of light, and to prove what's acceptable to God. We need to show righteousness and goodness and truth in all we do no matter where we are, no matter who we are with, in all the things that we are.

"You know as someone who stands and preaches to people a lot, one of the things that sometimes helps me is to ask, 'Am I saying something right now that I wouldn't say if I was standing right here? Am I showing to someone an attitude that I wouldn't show if I was standing in the pulpit? Because, if I am, I am back to one of those hypocrites that Jesus didn't like too much. Every thing we do and everything we say needs to be done as a child of light - as a child of God - as someone who is proving what is acceptable to God.

"That came home to me really strongly when I was back at Graceland College. You know, I got to College, and I was a pretty funny guy. I thought I had a good sense of humor, and I met up with some guys that had a good sense of humor, too, and we just had some great times (that sometime when I'm not in the pulpit I will tell you about.) We just had a real good time, and I thought people thought I was funny. I was always saying things, and it seemed like the more off color you got, the funnier people thought you were. One day we were in a big house meeting - all the people from our floor were gathered together in the lounge room. Something came up, and I said something that made everybody in the whole room laugh. It was off color. It was pretty bad. In fact, I probably would never repeat it again, but I said it and everybody laughed. They all thought it was great except for one guy. That guy's name was Charlie Carter. Charlie had spent some time traveling with Dad. He knew me and he knew my family. After everyone finished laughing, Charlie looked me in the eye and said, 'Doug Smith, I can't believe you said that!' I said, 'Oh, it's all right.' He said, 'No, It's not all right! Doug Smith, I can't believe that came out of your mouth!' There was silence in that room, and there was terror in my heart! I turned red and was embarrassed; and I wanted the mountains to fall on me so that no one would see me or know what I had done.

"You see, it does make a difference - the things we do. It does make a difference the things we say, and the way that we live our life if we are claiming to be followers of Jesus Christ. God is trying to prepare a people to meet Him. So He has given us commandments so we can know what kind of people we need to be. Sometimes we think of God as being mean, you know. He's got this book up there, and He keeps coming up with these commandments. He's trying to put hurdles in our path so He can trip us up, so He can book us! 'All right! You come before the day of judgment, now this one and this one you didn't do. OK, you're out of here. I knew I was going to

catch you if I got enough rules made up!' Sometimes we think of God as being that way - you know - just trying to set up all kinds of things to give me hassles in my life - to give me trouble - trying to make me do this and do that, kind of like our parents were when we were growing up.

"But God isn't that way. God isn't mean. He's not trying to trip you up. He's not setting up things to make you jump through hoops like a little trained dog. You know - 'God just wants to show His friends how good a training He can give a people so He makes them go do things that don't make any sense.' That's not God! God gives us His commandments so we can know what manner of person we ought to be.

God's not mean; but God is holy!

God's not mean; but God is holy! And there is going to come a time when all of the evil and all of the unholiness that's in the world and all the evil and all the unholiness that's in my life is going to come face to face with God, and God wants me to be prepared for that time. Let me read you what the scriptures say about that day. 2 Peter 3:10 - 'But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall shake, and the earth also shall tremble, and the mountains shall melt, and pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be filled with fervent heat; the earth also shall be filled, and the corruptible works which are therein shall be burned up. If then all these things shall be destroyed, what manner of persons ought ye to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking unto, and preparing for the day of the coming of the Lord wherein the corruptible things of the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the mountains shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, if we shall endure, we shall be kept according to His promise. And we look for a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.' God gives us commandments to transform us. He's letting us know what things are acceptable to Him and what things are not so that when that day comes, we can be looking forward to that new heaven and new earth.

God Gives Commandments For What It Does For Us

"You see, it doesn't change God if we keep the commandments. Why does God want us to keep His commandments? Is He going to love us more if we keep them? Does it make Him a better person because we are obeying Him? God doesn't give us commandments for what it does for Him. He gives us commandments for what it does for us. You see, God loves us with a perfect love. With my kids, it's little different story. I give them commandments and unfortunately, my human love is sometimes dependent upon their response. I wish it wasn't, but it is. It's a lot easier for me to show love to my children when I say, 'Go clean your rooms,' and in half an hour I come back and their room is cleaned. Or I say, 'Don't get on the computer until your room is clean.' and I come back and the room is clean before they are on the computer. But if I come back and the room is not clean, and they haven't kept my commandments, it's a little bit harder for me to show the same kind of love that I have for them. But God is not that way. You see, God has a perfect love, and that love is the same. He can't love us anymore, because it says that while we were yet sinners, He showed His love to us. So His love isn't dependent upon us keeping the commandments.

"In First John 2:4-5 John is saying, 'He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; and hereby know we that we are in him.' Love is perfected in us if we keep the commandments. The love doesn't

change, but it is able to be perfected in us. Another way it is put in the scriptures is in Doctrine and Covenants section 6:9b. The Lord is speaking to Oliver Cowdery here, and he says, 'Be faithful and diligent in keeping the commandments of God, and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love.'

"Sometimes when my children are upset with me, and I want to show them love - you know, something really bad has happened, and I want to show them how much I love them even though we have had a hard time over something, I will go up and want to put my arms around them. Instead they will give me the old straight arm, straight out of football. They Hmm, Hmm, turn a head and keep pushing until they can get to their room and get the door closed. My love isn't any less for them, but because of their actions, I am not able to encircle them in the arms of my love. And the Lord is telling us that if we will keep the commandments, it's not that He loves us any more, but He's able to show us that love in new ways - in ways that we haven't understood before.

"What else happens when we keep the commandments of God? In Jeremiah 7:23 the Lord said to us through Jeremiah, 'With this thing commanded I them saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.' Here the Lord says that if we obey Him and keep His commandments He will be our God, and we will be His people, and it will be well with us. You see, by keeping the commandments we develop a relationship with the Lord. By keeping the commandments we are able to have things be well with us because God is our Lord and we are His people.

"The commandments that the Lord gives us are for our own good. It's for what they will do for us. When the people decided at the day of Pentecost that they wanted to have a relationship with Jesus Christ, they asked Peter and the Apostles, 'What shall we do, now that the Lord has touched our hearts?' In Acts 2:38, 'Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive gift of the Holy Ghost.' The Lord wants us to keep His commandments in coming to Him in baptism; and as we begin to have a relationship with Him, He says that if we will come and be baptized, we can have a remission of our sins and that we can receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

God's Purpose In Us

"That promise goes on. In Mosiah 9:41 Alma is talking to the people, and he says, 'Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that you have entered into a covenant with him that you will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his spirit more abundantly upon you?' The Lord gives us the promise that if we will keep his commandments and serve him, he can pour out his spirit more abundantly upon us than anything we have felt before. God has shown us His love in that He sent Christ to die for us, and we show our love of God by keeping His commandments. Back in First John 4:9-10 - 'In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' And if we jump over to First John 5:3 - 'For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.' God loved us so much that He sent His Son Jesus so that we would be able to come back to Him; and if we love God the way that we show that

love - the thing that is the definition of loving God - is keeping His commandments so that the purpose that He has in our life can come to pass. Doctrine and Covenants Section 22 tells us that it is Christ's work and His glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. When Christ died on the cross, He took care of the immortality. Because Christ broke the bands of death, everyone will be resurrected. Everyone who has ever lived will live again. But the other part is something we have to do something about. The immortality is there, but the eternal life - the quality of life we are going to have is something that we are going to have to choose. So, if we love God, we are going to let God's purpose take place in our life. And what is God's purpose but to bring us to Him - to let us live with Him forever - being one with Him and with Christ for an eternity.

"And so the way that we show that we love God is that we let God do what His whole purpose in our life has been. And how do we let Him do that? By keeping His commandments. If we don't love God, we are going to try to do things that frustrate the things that He wants done in our life. And when we don't keep the commandments, we frustrate the thing the Lord wants to happen in our life. The Lord wants to bless us. The Lord has blessings for each and every one of us. The Book of Mormon tells us that when we keep His commands, He immediately blesses us.

"Do you think that God wants to bless you more because you have kept His commandments? What do you think? Does God not want to bless us, and we do something that makes Him change His mind? I don't think so; because whatever God purposes it's forever, and it's not going to change. So the Lord already wants to bless us. He has all these things that He wants to give us, and what changes when we keep the commandments is that we prepare ourselves to be able to receive the blessings that He has for us, so that He can finally give us that blessing. When we quit pushing Him away and quit pushing His Spirit out of our lives, then His Spirit can be in our life and He can give us the blessing that He so desires that we have. "What the Lord wants for us is to be righteous. Do you want for yourself what God wants for you? Do you want it as much as God wants it for you? God wanted it so much that He sent Jesus to come, to take on a tabernacle of clay, to suffer and to die, but even more than that to take upon Him the spiritual consequences of all your sins so that you could be forgiven and could be with Him again. That's how much God wanted to give you the opportunity to be righteous.

What Does It Mean To Be Hungry? To Be Thirsty?

"When Jesus was giving the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:8, He said, 'And blessed are all they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.' How much do you want to be righteous? Well, how hungry are you this morning? How much do we want food? I can go three days without food! OK, that's good. Maybe I can go a week without food! OK. How about water? I can go three days without water. Can you go a week without water? That's getting kind of iffy, depending on how well hydrated you were before you start, but you would be pretty thirsty by the time you had been a week without water. I don't know that I have ever been hungry in my life, but I have been thirsty.

"One time when I was in Israel we were walking from Masada down to the Dead Sea. It was a Sabbath Day, so there weren't many cars on the road, but we had come well prepared. I had about a quart of water. You have to realize this is right in the middle of the Judean Desert, so the humidity is zero %. It's about 110 degrees, so you don't sweat. It just evaporates right off your body as you are

walking along. It just sucks the fluid right out of you. So I drank my bottle of water in about the first ten minutes, and it's a long way from Masada to the Dead Sea.

"There were four of us going together. We decided we would have a better chance of maybe getting picked up if we were spread out, so we were all spread out, and I didn't know where any of my friends were. I'm walking along and I began to be really, really thirsty. I got a headache. I wasn't sweating any more. I was getting probably somewhat delirious, and I would have given anything for a drink of water.

"Fortunately, the girl who had left last, got a ride in a car. On the Sabbath day they don't like to drive, let alone to pick up people, because they are afraid of what people might think. But when a guy came along in a car, she had been able to flag him down. After he picked her up, she insisted that he stop for each of us up as well. Finally she got us all picked up, and we went down to a little resort place by the Dead Sea. I was stumbling. I was lurching from side to side, and as soon as I got in the resort, I gasped, 'I need water'. The attendant said, 'All we have is soda water'. I said, 'That's fine! That's what I want!' Have you ever drank soda water? Normally I wouldn't even touch the stuff. I was so thirsty I was paying a dollar seventy five per bottle of these two hundred, three hundred milliliters of soda water and just spilling it all over myself, and just so happy to be able to get some water back into my system, no matter how bad it tasted. I was so thirsty I would have given all the money I had - I would have given about anything to be able to drink.

"How bad do we want to be righteous? Are we OK if we go a week without righteousness? Are we OK if we go a month without righteousness? How long is it going to be before we decide that we want to have God's Spirit in our life? How long is it going to be before we want what God wants for us with every fiber of His being that we want it badly enough to begin to keep the commandments that He has given us?

A Treasure Worth Your Love

"Matthew 13:46, Jesus was sharing with the people what the Kingdom of Heaven was like. He told this parable: 'Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field. And when a man hath found the treasure which is hid, he secureth it and, straightway, for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field. And again the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.' Is the kingdom a treasure to you? Is it something that you would give up everything else for like you would for water after awhile?

"When I was in Kenya we met a young man named Tom Nyawire. You have probably heard some stories about Tom and the kind of person he is. But for those of you who may not have heard, Tom is probably one of the poorest people I know. We first met Tom when he was out of work and had come up to where we were looking for work. Ron and I were there and another man had invited him over to some meetings we were having. Because he knew English, he began to translate for us. We were there for a whole week, and it was amazing, people would be asking questions and Tom would be answering them in their language, then he would turn to us and say, 'You had already answered that question before, so I just gave them the answer that you gave them last time. It was like, 'WOW! This guy is really listening!'

"We got there on Monday and on Tuesday night Tom came in with tears in his eyes and said, 'Doug, I want to be baptized in the way that I have heard you talking about. I was baptized before, but

that was just to get into a church; but now I understand that baptism is a covenant, I want to make that covenant. I want to be baptized with the Holy Ghost. We didn't know where there was any water around the area, and he wasn't able to be baptized at that time. He went back to his home and began to tell the people about the things he had heard. He wrote us a letter and said 'I have been telling the people about the stick of Joseph and the stick of Judah and everybody here wants to know more about this stick of Joseph. Could you send me some Book of Mormons so I could share with the people here more about this wonderful thing. So we sent him the Book of Mormon. And he wrote back and said, 'I wish you and Ron were here to teach me because I have no one to teach me; but I have been reading and the Holy Spirit is teaching me these things. Then he would write these wonderful insightful things that the Lord had given him as he had been studying the Book of Mormon.

"Time went on and Tom still didn't get a job and he ended up with even more responsibility. His brother, who was a polygamist who had two wives, died leaving two more families that Tom was then obligated to take care of. Then Tom's own wife died about two or three days before the next set of missionaries got there. Dale Stafford and K.J. Eichorn were the ones on this trip. When they got there, they said, 'Oh, it's probably a bad time if you just had a death,' and Tom said, 'No. Now is the time we need you the most.'

"Many of the other people in the village were sick with the same illness that killed Tom's wife. They started down the mountain to go to hold a service, administering to people on the way down, and nobody was getting well. One of the last to be administered to was Elmod's wife, and she was so sick that she couldn't even sit up. She was just leaning over the table when they administered to her. After they had finished, she was still in pain and feverish. They said, 'Just go and rest and we will come back and check on you after the service'. After the service Dale was inspired by the Lord that he should have all the people join in a tight circle and pray for the sick ones. During that prayer, he asked that the angels would come and take away the scourge.

"As they started back up the mountain, the group got to Elmod's home, and his wife was preparing a meal for them. Surprised, they asked, 'What happened?' and she said, 'An amazing thing. I don't know whether I was asleep or awake, but as I was lying there, two men in white robes appeared, and the one man said, 'Why are you in bed?' I said, 'Because I am sick.' And the man said, 'Arise and take care of your family.' The man touched her, and the men disappeared. As soon as he touched her, she was well; so she got up and started taking care of the family - making a meal for the people she knew were coming back. After they finished eating, they went back up the mountain, and the other people to whom they had administered were also whole. Tom had seen these wonderful things, but his own wife had died before it had happened.

"One time we were there, I was just feeling so sorry for Tom! He had only one pair of clothes that I had ever seen him wear. He lived in a house with a dirt floor and had all of the responsibilities of all these people. They had to walk a mile and a half to get water and carry it back in buckets on top of their heads up a very steep mountain to get to the top where they lived. One time I saw them plowing a field. There was guy with a fence post that was sharpened on one end and a rope tied around it. The other guy was pulling the rope and the first man was prying on the ground. There was a bunch of rocks down there, and I said, 'Oh, are you removing rocks?' They said, 'No! We are plowing!' Plowing in gravel! But that's the ground that they had to work with. Tom lives in the part of Kenya

that only gets one rain in a year. Most places they have two rains a year so they can grow crops twice and they can have food. But up at Tom's place, it only rains once. And with all of this adversity and all of this poverty, and all of these sad things going on in this man's life, we were leaving one time. I was talking to him through the window of the car as we were getting ready to drive off, and my heart went out to him. I said, 'Tom, is there anything I can do for you?' He looked at me and tears welled up in his eyes as he said, 'Oh, yes. Would you pray for me that I may be able to eat of the sweet fruit of the tree of life someday with you in the Kingdom?'

"What would I have asked for in his position? What would I ask for now if Bill Gates came to me and said, Doug, is there anything I can do for you? Well, yeah! There's a lot you can do for me! There's so much I could do if I just had more money! If I just had a bigger house and a better car. If I just had all my financial worries taken care of - if I just had, you know, whatever. What would you do if a billionaire came and said, 'What can I do for you? Would you say, 'Would you pray for me that the righteousness of God can be in my life so that God's purpose can be fulfilled in my life and I can be with Him in the Kingdom as He wants me to be?' What do we hunger and thirst after? What is our treasure. What are we willing to give up all for?

"Another lady that we met in Kenya this last time we were there - her name is Hulda. We had gone to her home. She lived in place called Kiole which is one of the poorest slums in Kenya. Hulda had taken us in and we were crowded into her two room home - another one of these with concrete on the sides and dirt floor and people who had very, very little. After we had shared that evening, she said to us, 'You know, I think that God must love me more than anyone else on earth.' It broke my heart, and I said, 'No, Hulda. I think I have to disagree with you. I think God must love me more than anyone else on earth to allow me to be here to see the love that you have for Him.'

Do you want it? Do you want to be part of His kingdom? Do you want to be righteous? If you do, the Lord has given you a promise. In Doctrine and Covenants section 6:16. 'Therefore, fear not, little flock, do good, let earth and hell combine against you, for if you are built upon my Rock, they cannot prevail. Behold, I do not condemn you, go your ways and sin no more; perform with soberness the work which I have commanded you; look unto me in every thought, doubt not, fear not, behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet, be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the Kingdom of heaven. Amen.'

We were dismissed with a simple plea that we might all be able to eat of the 'sweet fruit of the tree of life' someday in the Kingdom.

Angel Ministry

Elder Alan Smith began his ministry on September 28 explaining that he felt directed to talk about angel ministry that morning and expressed his hope there would be something said that would help us understand more of the love of the Lord for us. For a scripture reading, he shared Moroni 7:29 - 34.

"And because he hath done this, my beloved brethren, hath miracles ceased? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men. For behold, they are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, shewing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind, in every form of godliness.

“ And the office of their ministry is, to call men unto repentance, and to fulfill and to do the work of the covenants of the Father which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men, by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him; And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts, according to the power thereof; And after this manner bringeth to pass the Father the covenants which he hath made unto the children of men.’

Brother Smith said, “I would like to talk a little bit about angels, the testimonies of people of the past who have shared of their experiences, the message that they bring, and how that applies to me in my life today.” Then he took us back to the scriptures and reviewed many of the testimonies of people through the scriptures who have talked about angel ministry.

“Some of the names are even kind of obscure. At least I didn’t recognize some of the ones in the Old Testament who had experiences with angels. How far back do we have to go to talk about angels? Is Adam far enough? Adam, you remember, was doing the sacrifices that he was told to do. The angel came and said to him, ‘Why are you doing that?’ ‘God told me to.’ And the angel explained to him that the sacrifices that were going to be done were in the similitude of, or to help people understand or remember the gift of Christ to us.

“Angels are spoken of in relation to the gospel in this way, ‘And thus the gospel began to be preached from the beginning, being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God and by His own voice and by the gift of the Holy Spirit.’ So even from the very beginning, it says, angels were ministering to men on earth trying to help them understand God better - to understand the message of salvation that was coming.

Angels Minister in All Ages

“Abraham had several experiences with angels, from the ones that told him that he was going to have a son to the angel that appeared to Hagar and told her about the blessings that would come to her. An angel visited Abraham to tell him not to sacrifice his son, and to explain what that experience was all about.

“Lot had the angels visit him in Sodom and Gomorrah. Jacob was met by the angels of God on a couple of occasions. Elijah was comforted by angels. Zacharias talked with an angel. Joshua was ministered to by angels. Gideon was ministered to by angels. Manoah and his wife. (That’s one I had not remembered.) Ornan. Enoch saw angels descending from heaven during the testimony of the Father and the Son.

“Angels offered ministry to Moses. An angel of the Lord went before the children of Israel as they left Egypt, and then went behind them as the pillar of fire led them. Probably one of the most interesting stories - remember Baalam. The donkey could see the angel even before he could, which makes you feel real good. Talk about being slow to recognize what is going on!

“The Book of Mormon records all kinds of experiences of angel. One of the first ones was when Nephi was being beaten with a rod by Laman and Lemuel. An angel appeared and said, ‘Stop beating up your brother!’ An angel appeared to Nephi and shared with him the vision that his father, Lehi, had received and explained what that was all about.

“Jacob told about seeing angels and being ministered to by them. An angel appeared to Alma, the son of Alma, and the sons of Mosiah and helped turn Alma’s life around. We’ll talk about that

experience a little later. Aaron was ministered to by angels. Amulek, Amalichi. King Benjamin got a lot of his sermon from the ministry of an angel who had brought it to him before he shared it with everybody else.

“The scripture talks about some of the powerful experiences Nephi and Lehi had being ministered to by angels before the time of Christ. So great was the faith of this Nephi, the son of Helaman, on the Lord Jesus Christ that angels did minister to him daily, and power was given him that he might know the ministry of Christ. So he not only had one experience, but angels were around every day to minister to him.

“Maybe those names ring bells with you and you remember some of their testimonies of the experiences they had with angels.

“We come down into the New Testament times. Just before the coming of Jesus Christ, angels appeared to Mary and to Joseph, to Zacharias and to Elizabeth, to the shepherds, to the wise men. All of these people had experiences with angels to let them know that Christ was coming. The scriptures tell us that when Jesus heard about John the Baptist being arrested and taken to jail, He sent angels to minister to John in prison. That’s one of the times I hadn’t remembered.

“Jesus, when he was preparing for his death, was ministered to in the Garden by an angel. Of course, there were angels at the tomb to help explain to the people who came looking for Jesus, what was going on.

“The New Testament in the Book of Mormon records ministry to Samuel the Lamanite and the time there were angels that surrounded the young children and ministered to them in that wonderful experience that is recorded in Third Nephi.

“Again, in the New Testament of the Bible, angels went before the Apostles Philip and Cornelius and Peter in their ministry. Peter was freed from prison by an angel. The whole Book of Revelation is an experience John the Revelator had with angel ministry and prophecies of things angels would be doing throughout history.

“Then you get into the Restoration process. Angels ministered to Joseph, sharing in various experiences in bringing forth the Book of Mormon and all of those kinds of things.

“So we have a string of testimonies in all times and all ages, that there is such a thing as angels and they minister to us. And we have experiences of angels ministering today. We’ll be sharing some of those a little later on.

Why Angel Ministry?

“So, what are angels? What is their purpose? One definition found in Hebrews 1:14 says, ‘Angels are ministering spirits. Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs to salvation?’ Of the three Nephites, the Book of Mormon says (3 Nephi 13:42), ‘And they are as the angels of God, and if they shall pray unto the Father in the name of Jesus, they can show themselves unto whatsoever man it seemeth them good.’ Genesis 18:23 (IV) tells us, ‘Angels are holy men and are sent forth after the order of God.’

“Many scriptures tell us about the purpose of angel ministry. Moroni 7:21-24 declares, ‘Behold He sent angels to minister unto the children of men to make manifest concerning the coming of Christ: Wherefore by the ministering of angels, and by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God, men began to exercise faith in Christ; and thus by faith, they did lay hold on every good thing;’

“One purpose of angels seems to be a preparatory ministry as well as a means of strengthening and gaining faith in Christ. In

Alma 10:22-2 we read about this preparatory ministry this way:

‘Therefore, we are thus highly favored, for we have these glad tidings declared unto us in all parts of our vineyard. For behold angels are declaring it unto many at this time in our land; and this is for the purpose of preparing the hearts of the children of men to receive His word, at the time of his coming in his glory.’

“Another purpose tied in with preparatory ministry is revealing God’s will. This is like the Holy Spirit in its ministry - one of the ways in which God tries to reach us. Joseph Smith experienced this way many times. In Section 26 of the Doctrine and Covenants he shares about the ministry of an angel instructing him concerning the sacrament, the work of those with whom Jesus expected to participate in it in the future, and the way in which we must prepare if we wish to be with Him then. It also talks about the experience of the renewing of the priesthood.

“Messengers were sent to give instruction, to answer questions, to enable people to give intelligent rather than automatic service as they tried to do what the Lord wanted them to do. Of course, the scripture that probably sums it up best was the one with which I opened reading from Moroni 7:31- 34. It says, ‘Angels are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves to them of strong faith and a firm mind.’ (Does it say that we have to be godly before we can have an experience with an angel, though?) ‘in every form of godliness.

“And the office of their ministry is, to call men unto repentance, and to fulfill and to do the work of the covenants of the Father which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men, by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him; And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts, according to the power thereof; And after this manner bringeth to pass the Father the covenants which he hath made unto the children of men.’

“These are all reasons and methods by which God uses angels to minister in our lives. Over and over again, the message that is brought is the good news that Jesus is the Christ, and a call to repentance - a call to change our ways. ‘For this cause that ye may not be destroyed, the Lord has sent his angel to visit many of his people, declaring unto them that they must go forth and cry mightily unto this people saying, Repent ye, repent ye, ye, for the kingdom of heaven is nigh at hand. therefore in his mercy he doth visit us by his angels that the plan of salvation might be made known unto us as well as to future generations.’ (Alma 7:39 &14: 38).

“Another one of the scriptures that talks about this is Helaman 2:73: ‘And he hath power given unto him by the Father, to redeem them from their sins, because of repentance; therefore he hath sent his angels to declare the tidings of the conditions of repentance, which bringeth unto the power of the Redeemer, unto the salvation of their souls.’ To bring the testimony of Jesus and His Father - to call us to repentance. To ‘Fear God, and give glory to him who sitteth upon the throne, forever and ever; (D&C 85:31c)’ As it says in Alma 12:177, ‘And behold, many did declare unto the people that they had seen angels, and had conversed with them; and thus they had told them things of God, and of his righteousness.’ Enoch’s experience - ‘And Enoch beheld angels descending out of heaven, bearing testimony of the Father and the Son.’ (D&C 36:6a).

“The message that probably may be most familiar to us is Revelation 14:6-7. ‘And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that

dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water.’

“The Lord calls us to intelligent service, and He has done that through the ages by sending angels as part of the many ways that He works with us to help us understand what He is doing. Angels come in preparatory ministry to help us to learn to exercise faith; to reveal God’s will in providing instruction and answering questions; to talk about the message of repentance; to help bring us a testimony of Jesus Christ; to call us to intelligent service - to call us to follow Him.

Should we Still Believe in Angels?

“Why should we believe in angels? Who are all these people who have had experiences with angels all through time, and why have they had those experiences? What difference does it make if we believe what they have to say the rest of the day? Sometimes we think that we have advanced so far that we can say, ‘We really don’t need angels today. We have come a long way.’ And we think that this idea is new, but here is what they said back in those times, too. (Alma 13:7) “What is that thou has testified? Has thou seen an angel? Why don’t angels appear to us? We are as good as you are!’ That was the Amalekites when Aaron came to minister to them. Why do we need to believe?

“Nephi’s brothers took this attitude, ‘Now, he says that the Lord has talked with him and also that angels have ministered unto him! But behold, we know that he lies unto us; and that he tells us these things, and he worketh many things by his cunning arts, that he may deceive our eyes, thinking, perhaps, that he may lead us away into some strange wilderness.’ (1 Nephi 5:49-50). That was after they had seen angels themselves! In these two instances they had enough experiences with angels eventually that they changed their minds, maybe; but it’s not new for people to scoff, and to wonder, and to not believe. So how can we affirm that all of these testimonies over the years mean anything?

“The closest to a personal experience I guess I have had is as I was talking about angels and their ministry at Northwest congregation in Des Moines one Sunday. I finished my sermon and was at the back of the church greeting people when someone came up to me and said, ‘Your sermon went very well this morning.’ I said, ‘I thought I had some liberty as I spoke.’ He said, ‘No! Your sermon went very well this morning!’ I said, ‘Well, thank you.’ He said, ‘No! You had an angel standing over your shoulder while you shared your sermon this morning!’ ‘Oh!’ I didn’t realize all the help I had had that morning in being able to share.

Angel Ministry Changes Lives

“All these people have shared their experiences, and do we believe, or do we not? One method of helping us evaluate whether someone has had an experience that has made a difference in their life is by looking at their life and seeing, did it make a difference? Has that experience done something to them? Probably the best example that we have out of all those testimonies is the example of Alma, the son of Alma. Over and over again in his ministry Alma told of the experience he had as the angel ministered to him as he and the sons of Mosiah traveled along the road. So I would like to share it as he did with his son Helaman. (Alma 17:3-24)..

“And now, O my son Helaman, behold thou art in thy youth, and therefore I beseech of thee that thou wilt hear my words, and learn of me; for I do know that whosoever shall put their trust in God, shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their

afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day; And I would not that ye think that I know of myself, not of the temporal, but of the spiritual; not of the carnal mind, but of God.

“Now behold I say unto you, If I had not been born of God, I should not have known these things; but God has by the mouth of his holy angel, made these things known unto me, not of any worthiness of myself, for I went about with the sons of Mosiah, seeking to destroy the church of God; but behold, God sent his holy angel to stop us by the way. And behold, he spake unto us, as it were the voice of thunder, and the whole earth did tremble beneath our feet, and we all fell to the earth, for the fear of the Lord came upon us.

“ But behold, the voice said unto me, Arise. And I arose and stood up, and beheld the angel. And he said unto me, If thou wilt not of thyself be destroyed, seek no more to destroy the church of God And it came to pass that I fell to the earth; and it was for the space of three days and three nights, that I could not open my mouth; neither had I the use of my limbs. And the angel spake more things unto me, which were heard by my brethren, but I did not hear them; for when I heard the words, If thou wilt not be destroyed of thyself, seek no more to destroy the church of God, I was struck with such great fear and amazement, lest perhaps I should be destroyed, that I fell to the earth, and I did hear no more; But I was racked with eternal torment, for my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree, and racked with all my sins. Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell; Yea, I saw that I had rebelled against my God, and that I had not kept his holy commandments; yea, and I had murdered many of his children, or rather led them away unto destruction; Yea, and in fine, so great had been my iniquities, that the very thoughts of coming into the presence of my God, did rack my soul with inexpressible horror. O, thought I, that I could be banished and become extinct both soul and body, that I might not be brought to stand in the presence of my God, to be judged of my deeds.

“And now, for three days and for three nights was I racked, even with the pains of a damned soul. And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people, concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

“Now as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart, O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who art in the gall of bitterness, and art encircled about by the everlasting chains of death. And now behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains nor more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more. And O, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain; yea, I say unto you, my son, that there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. Yea, and again I say unto you, my son, that on the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy; Yea, methought I saw even as our father Lehi saw, God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels, in the attitude of singing and praising their God; yea, and my soul did long to be there.

“ But behold, my limbs did receive their strength again, and I stood upon my feet, and did manifest unto the people that I had been born of God; Yea, and from that time, even until now, I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. Yea, and now behold, O my son, the Lord doth give me

exceeding great joy in the fruit of my labors; for because of the word which he has imparted unto me, behold, many have been born of God, and have tasted as I have tasted, and have seen eye to eye, as I have seen. Therefore they do know of these things of which I have spoken, as I do know; and the knowledge which I have is of God.” “What an experience as the angel helped him see the difference that could be in his life! There is testimony after testimony of the power that has come to people in their experiences with angels. Remember the story from Kenya of the area where the disease was affecting so many people, and they had the prayer and angels ministered and healed people as Brother Stafford offered that prayer. And as Doug shared when he came back, we now find a child named Dale Stafford, the first child born in one of those families because of the power of that experience.

“Brother Arthur Oakman shared the testimony of when he was young and there was the angel who came down the street where they lived. They were so poor, and they always went out to wait for their father. As he would come around the corner, if he had gotten work, he had a little kick in his gait and maybe was whistling; and if he didn't have work, they knew that they had another day in which there might not be much to eat. As they waited, a man, who seemed to be a street singer, came down the street singing a hymn that we have in our hymnal - 'Begone unbelief. My Savior is near.' He came singing down the street to just where Arthur, his sister and his mother were standing, and asked for something to eat. His mother went in and got what little they had. He told her that from this day forward, they would never want. Just then the father came around the corner swinging his leg. He had gotten a job, and he always had work from then on. Then when Arthur's mother was dying, the angel came again and provided ministry.

“I remember the story of Enid DeBarthe. You remember Enid, Her nose is gone, eaten away. When she was a little girl, after this had happened, you can imagine what the kids said and what the people said as they looked at her and saw her disfiguration. And one day a man came, took her on his lap and placed seeds in her hand and told her if she planted those seeds in her life, that the Lord would bless her despite her disfigurement. She says that when she thinks about the experience, she can still feel the seeds in her hand.

“I remember when I was in junior high school, we were in a youth worship service in the little tiny building that they used at Graceland for their drama building. Doris Negaard's father had been killed in a car accident before she was born, and her only memories of him were from pictures. As she was sitting in that service that morning, her father came down the aisle, kissed her on the cheek and then went on. And she knew that he loved her even though she didn't have another remembrance of him at that time. These are testimonies of people today that angels continue to minister and make a difference in the lives of people.

“Why should we be looking for angel ministry today? Well, do we need any repentance? In the world today do we need to be called to repentance? Do we need to know more of the gospel in our lives? Does God need intelligent service from us to which He wants to call us? And what about our time? Do you know what Jesus said would happen when He was ready to come again? Angels would be ministering in power to help us be ready for that day. If this is that day, should we be looking and watching and expecting that kind of ministry? The scripture says that angels will be gathering people in from the four corners of the earth.

“I would like to leave you with this final promise this morning: from Alma 16:144-146: ‘And now, behold, I say unto you; and I

would that you should remember that God is merciful unto all who believe on his name: therefore, he desireth in the first place, that ye should believe, yea, even on his word. And now, he imparteth his word by angels, unto men, yea; not only to men, but women also. Now this is not all: little children do have words given unto them many times, which confound the wise and the learned.'

"Are you a man? Are you a woman? Are you a child? Are you listening and watching?"

News & Notes

Book of Mormon in Nepalese

At the beginning of the service September 21, Seventy Ronald Smith announced the baptism and confirmation of Nepalese Ram Baral at Woodbine Saturday under the hands of George Thomas and Francis Harper. On Sunday Brother Baral was ordained an Elder with the approval of the Woodbine branch. He has been associated with the Restoration since the Holy Spirit directed him to enter a book store and find there a book that contained the fullness of the gospel. There he found the Book of Mormon and has since translated it into Nepalese and had it bound into book form. He had previously translated the Bible into Nepalese. He testified that he saw in vision Seventy George Thomas and Elder Frances Harper clothed in white and so wished for them to baptize him.

Declaring that you are a Christian in Nepal is to endanger your life. Several who have been baptized have had their homes and their livelihood jeopardized and now we have the report of one being beheaded in front of his wife and children for his refusal to deny his Lord, Jesus Christ. Pray for the Saints in Nepal!

Attendance at the Retreat

Thirty members of the Mount Ayr Restoration Branch of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints attended the Retreat at Farwesta camp grounds September 26-28. Total attendance exceeded two hundred. The theme of "Our Heritage" pervaded the activities from the opening mixer and campfire directed by Ronald and Di Smith to the final preaching service with Elder Bill Leutzinger our minister. Bud and Mary Drummond were registrars and directors of the Retreat. Alberta Cunningham saw to it that we were well fed. Robert Rolfe served as our Pastor.

Rudy Leutzinger conducted the adult classes. John Larson was on hand for the College age youth, Ron Smith and Sherman Phipps were with the junior high and senior high youth. Bud and Mary Drummond, Alicia Sindt, Judy and Bill Faunce, and a host of others worked with the children. Brad and Michele Barnhard appeared in costume as Joseph and Emma Smith at both the children's classes and at the campfire. Diane Ludy provided a pictorial display of the history of the church from Joseph Smith's first vision to today.

Bryan Mundy directed the missionary testimony service at which he, Bill Barrett, Doug Patterson, Dale Stafford and Ronald Smith shared testimonies of their recent experiences in Kenya and Nigeria Africa. Dale also gave his testimony at the Saturday night campfire of his recent experience in Kenya when the Lord responded to his prayer and the prayer of the Saints by sending angels into the villages where an epidemic was killing many people. The angels healed the people and wiped away the scourge.

Patriarch Mike Ballantyne was on hand to give patriarchal

blessings. He also bore testimony of the genesis of the Restoration Patriarch's letter instructing us to prepare for the general assembly which is to come. That meeting is designed to help bring unity to all who believe in the Restoration in preparation for the coming of our Lord. Those of you who have that letter will recall that they have asked that we:

1. Keep a diary, writing down the blessings we receive, thank God daily for those blessings and share the testimonies with others. All this to help us "enter into the depths of humility".

2. Spend at least two hours a week studying the scriptures, especially the promises. "Feast upon the words of Christ".

3. Fast Wednesday evening and Sunday morning meals, praying that God will "soften our hearts and bring the spirit of unity into our midst". Fast and pray as a branch at other times for special blessings.

4. Make a list of those to whom you can minister and ask God to assist you to reach out to them in all the ways possible.

If you do not have the Patriarch's letter and would like one, please ask.

Work Day Scheduled

October 18 is the day set aside for us all to gather at the church and work to fix and clean and otherwise attack the many little jobs that go with the operation of such a facility as the one in which we worship. Plan to be there! You will be glad you took the time!

Book of Mormon Day Coming

Personnel of the Book of Mormon Foundation will be on hand Sunday morning, October 26 to provide ministry concerning the Book of Mormon. Dennis Moe, Director of the Foundation, says that it is anticipated that interns who have served during the summers will teach classes for children from kindergarten through elementary school ages. Older youth will be expected to join the adults for instruction and discussion of topics relevant to our present knowledge of that significant scripture.

**CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST
Mount Ayr Restoration Branch
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