

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

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Why Fire Trucks Are Red

Why are fire trucks red? Well, fire trucks have four wheels and eight men; everybody knows that four plus eight is twelve. There are twelve inches in a foot and a foot is a ruler. Queen Elizabeth II is a ruler, and also the name of one of the largest ships on the seven seas. Seas have fish and fish have fins. Fins fought the Russians. Russians were "Reds." Fire trucks are always rushin'. Therefore fire trucks are red. If you think that is wild, you ought to hear some people try to explain why they don't come to church. (March 2004 Pulpit Helps)

One of my father's sayings was, "a poor excuse is better than no excuse." Yet, we are all (before God), without excuse. Jesus said: "... and they all ... began to make excuse ..." (Luke 14:18); (why) "... seek to excuse yourselves?" (Matthew 6:36). Paul said, "... so that they are without excuse ..." (Romans 1:20). Joseph Smith the prophet said, "... that all men may be left without excuse ..." (Doctrine and Covenants 98:12d).

Speaking about excuses, can you remember the last time: you prayed more than 30 seconds; read the scriptures; testified of Jesus to another person? If you cannot, think this thought. The day is soon coming when you will be required to appear before the God of the Universe, and (unlike my father's saying) you will have NO excuse. As you think about your life, can you honestly say you don't have the time or desire to attend to the salvation of your soul?

TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

Testimony of Christ

On March 7, Sacrament Sunday, Elder Gerald Bolingbroke brought us the message. He prepared us for the Sacrament by first reading a beautiful and meaningful scripture from the Doctrine and Covenants, Sec.. 36:12 c-e, "And the Lord said unto Enoch, As I live, even so will I come in the last days---in the days of wickedness and vengeance to fulfill the oath which I made unto you, concerning the children of Noah; and the day shall come that the earth shall rest, but before that day, shall the heavens be darkened, and the veil of darkness shall cover the earth. and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth, and great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but my people will I preserve; and righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth; to bear testimony of my Only Begotten; "

Brother Bolingbroke went on to tell us that he recently read an interesting article in the Sky and Telescope magazine. This article was entitled "Is the Universe Fine -Tuned for Life?" In this article the author, Dan Falk, mentions that the nature of atoms and molecules, the strength of the forces, the properties of stars and galaxies all seem perfect for life to exist.

Over the years some astronomers and physicists have argued that the cosmos was "fine tuned" in such a way that life was able to exist. If the values of the parameters that govern the physical world had been slightly different, then galaxies, stars, and planets could not have formed and thus there would be no life. One example of this fine tuning is the strength of gravity. If the force of gravity had been a bit stronger, the universe would have collapsed into a big crunch. If it was a bit weaker, matter would never have coalesced into stars and galaxies.

Another example can be seen in the smoothness of the Big Bang. If the initial fluctuations in the Big Bang fireball had been a bit smaller, the universe would be dark and featureless; if they had been a bit larger, the universe would be dominated by black holes rather than stars and galaxies. We know now that black holes exist in the center of most galaxies. In some cases there are million solar-mass black holes in the center of some galaxies. Black holes seem to be there to hold galaxies together.

Another example of fine tuning is the masses of subatomic particles. We know that the neutron is just slightly heavier than a

proton, which ensures the existence of hydrogen. If protons were a bit heavier, they would spontaneously decay into neutrons, and there would be no hydrogen atoms and thus no stars. Now protons outweigh electrons about 2000 times over. This imbalance allows molecules to take on well-defined shapes, which is essential in forming complex molecules like DNA.

Also, the strength of the strong nuclear force is an indicator of how our world is fine tuned for life.. A bit weaker and the universe would contain only hydrogen. There would be no nuclear reactions to power stars. A bit stronger and protons would pair up making stars impossible.

And most recently, the magnitude of the cosmological constant, the mysterious anti-gravity force that seems to be accelerating the universe's expansion is proof of the fine tuning of our earth.

Many astronomers and physicists are now accepting this fine tuning for life. In the 1980's there were few who spoke about this. Andre Linde in the late 1990's, who was from Russia, was invited to speak at a conference in the U.S. He told the conference organizers that his talk would be on the fine tuning. They told him he had better not talk of this for members of the conference used to throw eggs at anybody who talked about the Anthropic principle. But in March of 2003, times were changed, and several speakers used the A-word.

Brother Bolingbroke believes this idea of fine tuning has come out now to testify of Jesus Christ as the Creator of all. He went on to express his beliefs that the ones who oppose it are probably the agnostics or atheists. We know Christ made the universe so that we could exist.

He also recently read a book entitled *The Bible as History* by Ver"ner Keller. Christians have wondered about Ur of the Chaldees, as mentioned in the scriptures. As stated in Gen:11:19, "And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son and Sarai his, daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go to the land of Canaan, and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there." Today Ur is a railway station about 120 miles north of Basra. one of the many stops on the Bagdad railway.

In 1854 Mr. J.E. Taylor, a British subject stationed in Iraq who had been connected with a museum in London, had often heard in Basra, Iraq, about the strange great heap of stones that his expedition was approaching. Up until then the Bible had been the only historical source of our knowledge of that part of Asia before about 550 B.C. Taylor pitched his tents at the foot of the red mound. He thought of old statues, armor, ornaments and buried treasure. He climbed to the top and tapped for hidden chambers. He made a decision which today we can only deeply regret. He took his labor gangs and set them to work at the top. Taylor gave the order to pull down the top story. Day after day masses of bricks crashed down. After many weeks, chattering voices at the top of the mound were suddenly hushed. The workers went to Taylor's tents. In their hands they held little bars, cylinders made of baked clay. Taylor expected more. As he cleaned his finds, he recognized that the clay rolls were covered over and over with inscriptions, cuneiform writing. He understood none of the writing. The cylinders were packed and dispatched to London.

Seventy-five years later the world learned about these cylinders that had been forgotten. The Arabs carried the bricks away from the mound where Taylor had found the cylinders. When the cylinders were deciphered, they found the name of the king was King Ur-Nammu. Was he the ruler of Ur of the Chaldees? If only

Taylor had instructed his workers to dig at the site of the mound from the sides inward, the structures would have been salvaged.

For three winter seasons an Anglo-American expedition worked on the site of ancient Ur. Under the red slopes lay a whole city bathed in the bright sunshine. For before them they thought was Ur of the Chaldees.

Theologians and even archaeologists registered their dissent. They thought Genesis pointed to a different place.

Later a French garrison was over Syria. A Lt. Cabane was the station commander when he was called into the orderly room to settle what he thought was a quarrel between Arabs that he was supposed to settle. But this time something seemed different. Through an interpreter he found the Arabs were digging a grave for a relative on a remote hill site which was called Tell Hariri when out popped a stone corpse. In the cool of the evening Cabane drove to Tell Hariri, which lay about seven miles to the north of Abu Kemal near the Euphrates River. Now Cabane was no expert, but when he saw the stone corpse he knew it must be very old. Cabane wrote a detailed report of the find to Henry Seyrig, Director of Antiquities in Beirut, and to the Museum at Aleppo.

Nothing happened for months until in November a telegram came from Paris, from the Louvre. It said in a few days important visitors from Paris would be arriving. Professor Parrot, the well know archaeologist, accompanied by scientists, architects, assistants, and draftsmen. By December 14, 1933, Tell Hariri was buzzing with the previously mentioned people. On the 23rd of January, 1934, while digging carefully through the outer crust of the Tell, there appeared out of the rubble a neat little figure which had writing on the right shoulder. Everyone bent over it. It read: "I am Lamgi-Mari king of Mari." One text maintained that Mari was the tenth city to be founded after the flood. On the second season of digging, the spades came upon the houses of the city. Mari had been found. By 1936, 138 rooms and courtyards had been uncovered, but they had not reached the outer walls of the palace. Thirteen thousand clay tablets awaited deciphering.

Later some of the tablets were deciphered. The authorities read with astonishment a report from Bantam, an officer of the desert police, "Say to my lord. This from Bantam. thy servant. Yesterday left Mari and spent the night at Zuruban. All the Benjamites were sending fire-signals." In this police report from the central reaches of the Euphrates in the 19th century B.C. there appeared the name of one of the tribes, Benjamin, known to us from the Bible. On other clay cylinders, the ones doing the deciphering came up with familiar sounding names from Bible history, names like Peleg, and Serug, Nahor, Terah and Haran. Haran, was the home of Abraham and Nahor was the home of Rebecca, the wife of Isaac.

A scripture in Genesis 24:10 tells us of the city of Nahor. "And now Abraham was old, being stricken in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto his oldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had; Put forth I pray thee thy hand under my hand, and I will make thee swear before the Lord, the God of heaven, and the god of thy earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son, of the daughters of the Cannanites among whom I dwell; but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred and take a wife unto my son Isaac. And the servant took ten camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor."

There is much more on the clay cylinders which verify the Bible.

The Lord said he would send truth out of the Earth before he comes back the second time, and this is some of that truth. Let us always stay close to His gospel.

Brother Bolingbroke reminded us that shortly, we would be partaking of the bread and wine of the Sacrament of Jesus Christ. Christ truly fulfilled the role of the Sacrificial lamb. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul all tell of the institution of the sacrament. From Paul's account we learn that on the night in which Christ was betrayed, Jesus took bread, and when He had blessed it he said, "Take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when He had supped saying. This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me" (I Cor 11:23-26). Mark adds that the blood of Christ was shed for many, and was the token of the new covenant (Mark 14:12-26). The Apostle John gives us the clearest statement of the New Testament when referring to the importance of the Lord's Supper. He uses the words: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you (John 6:53). Members of the Roman Catholic church call this sacrament the Eucharist and believe that at the moment when the wafer and wine are held up before the congregation at the sacrifice of the Mass, the material elements become the actual body and blood of the Lord. They may get this idea from John's words.

Brother Bolingbroke encouraged us to partake of the Sacrament worthily, reminding us that all God asks of us is to repent and always remember Him and keep His commandments.

Prepare For Things to Come

Patriarch/Evangelist Verle Cornish chose Moroni 6:4-9 as the scripture which he said most closely described an ideal Congregation. "And after they had been received in baptism, and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ, And their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith.

"And the church did met together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls: and they did meet together oft to partake of bread and wine, in remembrance of the Lord Jesus; And they were strict to observe that there should be no iniquity among them; and whoso was found to commit iniquity, and three witnesses of the church did condemned them before the elders; And if they repented not, and confessed not, their names were blotted out, and they were not numbered among the people of Christ; but as oft as they repented, and sought forgiveness, with real intent, they were forgiven.

"And their meetings were conducted by the church, after the manner of the workings of the Spirit, and by the power of the Holy Ghost; for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach or exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done."

Brother Cornish first commented on his appreciation of and thanks for the talents used by Yvonne Galusha and her daughters Cessaries, and Jazmyn to praise God as they sang "Shine, Jesus

Shine" with Jazmyn adding her violin to the piano accompaniment provided by Jan Jordison. He then expressed appreciation for the association he and his family have had with the Mount Ayr congregation - son Peter as a member of the congregation while a student at Graceland, and Erin Smith having become his bride.

Defining the Ideal Congregation

"An ideal congregation to me is one in which there is absolute and complete and total support for each other, and that each of us spends time and makes opportunity to make sure that every need that exists in that congregation is taken care of." Brother Cornish then recalled a large youth camp at which the names of all the campers and the staff were placed in a hat. Each person, youth and staff, drew a name from the hat and were instructed to, first of all, learn who this person was, and at some point during the week, they were to perform some unexpected act of kindness to that person. "It worked very well. In one particular instance we had a lady, whose name was Lorraine White, who came to camp to teach crafts and a few other things. This year she had brought the equipment necessary for the children to make candles. These were very beautiful candles with all the flips and loops that you see in a candle store. "And we had a young boy whose name was Barry. Barry was a tough kid! He didn't want to be good! It seemed that way, and it bore out in the kind of life that he lived. Lorraine drew the name of Barry and was to perform some act of kindness for this young man. So on Saturday, before we were to leave camp, she took this very beautiful special candle to Barry and said, "Barry I want to give this to you." "Surprised, Barry asked, 'Why are you doing this?' Lorraine looked him right square in the eye and said, 'Because I love you!' And because of the Spirit that accompanied that statement of love, he knew that it was true. He knew that this woman loved him no matter what he may have done not to deserve that love.

"There are a lot of people sitting in this congregation this morning. We are not going to pass out the hat with names in it, but I would like to suggest that sometime during the next twelve months every single one of you in here perform some act of kindness for every other person in this congregation. I believe that if you will do this, as a true expression of love, there will begin to be a significant change in your lives as to how you feel about each other, how you become bonded with each other, and how you worship together.

"I just recently came to the point in my involvement as an Evangelist/Patriarch in the church of giving my three hundredth blessing. When you compare that to Bill Davies who gave over a thousand and my father who gave over five hundred, and other men who gave many, many more, that's not very many. But every time that I give a blessing to an individual, there develops between us a very special bond - a relationship that is never broken. There are some in this room, at least one, who received their blessing through me; and there is a special bond that exists of love because we shared together in something significant that relates to the Spirit of God.

A Miracle Only God Can Perform in Us

"As your congregation continues to grow and develop and prepare for that which is to come, which I believe is shortly to come to pass, you will begin to develop the kind of love that the Lord desires for His people to have within their lives. We are not just to love our neighbor. We are to love each other even as Jesus loves us. And there's a difference in that. In order for us to have the freedom to love, there needs to take place within each of us a change of heart. We were talking the other night in one of our classes - we have a class in our home on Tuesday night. Then there's prayer service and on Thursday night we have another class at church and then there's

all weekend, and we don't have a free moment, and we love it! We were talking about the fact that each of us must have created within us a miracle which we are incapable of bringing to pass in our own lives. That miracle is that our hearts must have a great change wrought upon them. Placed within us by the power of the Spirit of God must be the love which we know that He has for each of us. I can't love my wife. I can't love Ron or any of you the way that I need to love you if God's love first of all is not in me. I have no ability to change my heart. I have only the ability to willingly, as was stated in our early service this morning, turn everything over to our God and allow Him to do in our lives that which needs to be done. But the love that exists between our spouses - the love that exists between each other as members of this branch - needs to increase to a level beyond that which it is such that God will see, through the evidence of that love, a people that He can call His own and take into His kingdom, even the Kingdom of Zion.

"There is something that we feel, at least in the Patriarch's order, that has taken place over the last year that has been very special to us. We met yesterday morning, as we do at least once a month. We do a lot of things together. A lot of time that we spend together is spent in prayer- in prayer for you, the Saints of the church - in prayer for just all kinds of things. And there has developed among us a bond, a relationship which has been like no other in terms of the fraternity of Priesthood that I have ever experienced in my life. We genuinely love each other and pray for each other on a continuing basis, and it is our joy to do so. We feel that out of that experience we have come together and we feel that it is our responsibility to assist the Saints of God in preparing their lives for the time to come.

"Jim Dunning, an Elder in the Oak Grove congregation, preached a sermon in which he told of an experience he had recently. In that experience he found himself in an open air setting with many, many people gathered around. All of a sudden it seemed like the moon came and covered the sun leaving them with very little light. They didn't know what to do. So they seemed to gather in little small groups of eight or ten, no one seeming to know exactly what it is that they needed to do to receive that which they felt needed to be received. They felt that the Lord wanted to speak to them, but that He could not because they were not sufficiently prepared. He said he was given to know that there were those in that group that were sufficiently prepared, but they could not receive as well because all had not prepared; and so that body that was there was not sufficiently prepared to receive the will of the Lord. He felt the need to share with his congregation that we must, of necessity, begin to prepare our lives like we have never done before that we might become one with God and with each other in such a way that we have removed from our thinking anything except our willingness to heed the mind and will of God in our lives.

"There is a scripture which is often shared in a number of places, and one of the ones that is special to me is in the story of King Benjamin. When King Benjamin called his people together, he said, 'I don't call you here to trifle with words. I want you to open your eyes that you can see and your ears that you can hear that you might receive and understand the mysteries of God.' Why do you suppose it is that Zion has not yet been redeemed in our midst? Could it possibly be that we do not understand the mysteries of the Kingdom and the mysteries of God to the degree that we need to understand them such that we can receive the mind and the will of God? As a part of that statement, King Benjamin said, 'I am impelled to call you together to listen to my words before I go so that your blood will

not be upon my hands.'

"And so we feel, as a body of Patriarchs that we must of necessity do everything that we can possibly do to encourage the Saints of God to come together as one - to prepare their lives such that they become humble before God in the presence of each other - loving one another in ways in which we have not loved each other in the past.

Our Most Difficult Problem

"I was in a Priesthood meeting of a branch that invited me in to talk about what we are doing and I was asked the question, 'What do you think is the most difficult problem that we have in the Restoration today?' I said, 'We are too critical of each other. We judge each other unrighteously, and we do not love each other as Jesus has commanded that we love each other. Do you have a difference with someone else whether in the branch or not within the branch? If we do, how do you suppose we are to enter into the Kingdom of God until that's resolved? We can't, and we won't until that is removed.

"I had an experience, one in particular where I was really wrong - not the only one. I think I was wrong in some others as well. One day Peter had done something that I did not like. I might have had some other things going on in my life which contributed to the manner in which I handled that which he did - which wasn't really that bad, but I came down on him really, really hard. He just took it, but as I thought about what I had said to him and the fact that what I had said to him was not in love, I knew that I had sinned. So the next day, I went to Peter - it took me a day - I went to Peter the next day and put my arm around his waist, because I can't put it any higher (Peter is taller than his Dad.) I told him that I loved him and that I was sorry that I had treated him the way that I did. Peter took it for how it was offered, and there was restored to us not only that which we had had before but even more because we could sense, within each other and how we interacted under that circumstance, that we had learned something - both of us - me for my mistake and he for whatever it was that he learned. And so we loved each other more because we were able to resolve that circumstance between us.

"If there is anything that you have relative to the difference in the lives of other individuals, take care of it. No matter how difficult it may be - no matter how difficult it may be for the other individual, we need to take care of those circumstances within our lives, and to be free from those burdens.

"About six months after we moved up to Independence, I said to my wife and a few close friends, 'If I had known it was going to be like this, I would never have come!' You may smile at that, but I meant it! I had never in my life seen people in the church treat people in the church the way they did; and it broke my heart! There was an individual who wronged me, and I was very upset about it. But until I came to the point where I began to pray for him, I did not have the ability to forgive him. I began to pray for him that God would soften his heart and that there would be allowed in our lives that which would restore a relationship where both of us could stand in the stead of God and minister unto others. Finally one day, we came together. I extended my hand to his. He accepted it, and we agreed that now was the time. Too late. It should have been a lot earlier, but let's now put all of this behind us and move on and bring the ministry of God's Spirit to the lives of people, and we have done so. It can happen. It needs to happen. There needs to be no relationship which we have with any individual anywhere which would prevent us from entering into the Kingdom of God.

Patriarch Earl Allen

“I want to share a little bit about Patriarch Earl Allen. I probably wouldn’t share this if he were still living. Earl was seventy nine when he passed away. He had spent a lot of years in Texas, which commends him very highly, and was an absolute gentleman. You couldn’t find a more gentle, kind man than Brother Earl Allen. Although I had heard of Earl for a long time, I hadn’t really gotten involved with him until about three years ago when the Remnant people moved on and there were left behind a few of the Patriarchs, eight of us. We began to worship together, to spend time together, to go on trips together. Almost exactly a year ago, Vernon Darling, Earl Allen and I went to Woodbine, Iowa. We had a preaching service every night for five nights. We gave seventeen Patriarchal Blessings, visited in the homes and did a number of other things and we just had an outstandingly marvelous time. I could see in the life of this man a dedication on the level of the greats of the past of the church, for he loved the Lord.

“Brother Earl and I went to New York on Labor Day weekend of last year as invited guest ministers for a weekend retreat of the Unification Committee, a group of which Joseph F. Smith from the Temple Lot church is a member. There were five different factions of the Restoration gathered there that weekend. They had chosen to accept the information that’s in this booklet. (Brother Cornish held up the booklet that the Patriarchs prepared and hope to put into the hands of every Restoration family as an aid to preparation for the spiritual endowment of the church.) The entire weekend was spent in discussing how they as individuals could implement this level of preparation in their lives to such an extent that they might be ready when God moves in power to bring to pass the redemption of Zion, that they would be ready. The experience that we had with them was one of the very high lights of our life in terms of the ministry of the Spirit of God that was there.

“And there was an experience that I had in that setting that I never ever had before anything like it! And I was afraid because you don’t do this! On the final morning, the whole camp was sitting in a big circle. There was a young man who was just seventeen years of age. I didn’t even know his name, yet when the Spirit of the Lord came to me and said, ‘This young man has a call to the office of Priest.’ I said, ‘OK Lord. What do You want me to do with that?’ Understanding the fact that all of these five different factions of the Restoration were there, “Lord, what do You want me to do with this?” (As it turned out, he is a part of one of the Restoration branches.) Finally, the Lord wouldn’t let me sit down any longer. I got up and share some things with the people, and then I said, ‘This young man over here is called to the office of Priest, and I bear testimony to you of the truth of it.’ Immediately after that, for the next half hour, people got up and bore testimony to the truth of that call. They, too, had evidence and didn’t know what to do about it - evidence relative to this young man, who is a fine young man - and prayed beautiful prayers. Sometimes we limit what God can do through us, don’t we, because we have notions about what He will do and what He will not do; and we need to have those notions removed.

“Earl Allen had a cancer. The sac which encloses the lung separated from the lungs and began to collect water within that area, about a half liter a day. Eventually, when it got so bad, he finally went to the hospital. Unfortunately, it was for the last time, which no one really knew. I administered to him as others did and it was clear to me that this administration was not unto life but unto death. And yet the life of this remarkable man, in his last days was just a

tremendous blessing to his family. He conducted worship services, several of them, almost every day while he was there in pain with an oxygen mask on. To the very end, he praised God and thanked Him for all He had done. He was a great minister to his family in those last days. Finally he said to his sons - he has two sons and a daughter - ‘If I can’t stand and preach the gospel for Jesus Christ, I want the Lord to take me.’ The only thing that had been keeping him alive was oxygen. He wasn’t on any drugs or anything other than oxygen. His mask accidentally came off one night and his oxygen saturation level dropped below seventy percent. When you start to get that low, you just can’t breathe, and you die. He made the choice to have the oxygen mask removed so that he could be taken. They called the Patriarchs and we all came in. We stood and had a prayer with him. Then we went from the room and stood in a circle holding hands with his children and other relatives and prayed for them. I do not mourn his loss. He’s already on the other side doing the will of the Lord, and is a good example for us in terms of how we ought to live on this side.

Four Points of Preparation

“I want to just briefly share the four points which have come out as the means of preparation. Three of them are really preparation and one of them is what we need to do in order to show that the preparation is taking. 1. First is that we need to humble ourselves even into the depths of humility. 2. We need to pray and fast continually from this day on, never to stop. Section 85 says, I command that you pray and fast from this time on. There is no ending for that. 3. We are to feast upon the words of Christ; and all of this so that we can begin working tirelessly for the benefit of each other.

“So each of you, however many of you are in your congregation, if you were to perform some act of kindness, and if there were 52 of you, that means to one person every week you need to perform an act of kindness. So don’t let it get away from you. Get a little ahead. Let me tell you, if you will begin to do this, if every single person in this congregation will begin to perform an act of kindness for the other that they are not expecting, but that you are doing out of the love in your heart, there will begin to be changes within your congregation, and even the spiritual gifts of God will find place within your lives.

“I said to the Priesthood in our branch at our regular Monday evening Priesthood meeting the other night, ‘You know, I have reached the spiritual level that I want to reach.’ They were taken aback a little bit by this and asked, ‘What do you mean by that?’ I said, ‘Because if I really wanted to reach a spiritual level far above where I am, I would do everything possible to make sure that it happened’.

“Are you satisfied with the level of your spiritual life? I hope not, and I’m not really satisfied with mine either. But unless we desire and find ourselves in places and in the presence of others who have spiritual levels above ours, we need to make sure that we do nothing that would hinder us from raising our spiritual levels to that which is consistent with that which God wants for each of us. It’s all about wanting it with all your heart.

“I want to read three scriptures, the last of which I think is appropriate for our time. No, I’m going to read two. The first is from Doctrine and Covenants 76:2a and b: ‘For thus saith the Lord, I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end; great shall be their reward, and eternal shall be their glory; and unto them will I reveal all mysteries; ...’ And all we have to do for

that is to serve the Lord in righteousness and truth until the end. “Doctrine and Covenants 6:9b: ‘Be faithful and diligent in keeping the commandments of God, and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love.’

“There’s not one soul here that God does not love with a love that’s beyond our ability to comprehend. And if the desire of our heart is to serve Him to the best of our ability, and eliminate from our lives those sins of omission and those sins of commission, all of these very blessings will be poured out upon us, and we will stand in the presence of the Lord to be blessed with a great blessing. “I believe that the Lord is preparing, even at this time, those who will be able to enter into the Kingdom of Zion. And I don’t believe that those individuals are just in the Restoration branches. I believe that they are in all factions of the Restoration and even beyond the Restoration; and that God is preparing a people that He will bring together by the power of His hand and redeem Zion. And I believe that is soon to happen. If it doesn’t happen soon, we are going to be out of ministers. We are going to be out of just about everything, aren’t we?”

“I had a young man come after he had received a blessing one time and wanted to know why something that was said in his blessing had not happened as it said it would. So we read it together and finally he opened his eyes of understanding and said, ‘OH! OH! I blew it, didn’t I?’ the Lord said something would happen, but it was necessary for him to do something in order for that to happen. When it didn’t happen, it was beyond the time that it could. He had lost a blessing because he had not fulfilled the requirements for it! So I said to him, ‘Oh, that’s in the past. Where do you go from here?’ And the Lord is saying to each one of us this morning, ‘Where do you go from here?’ And I trust that the day will come soon that when Zion is redeemed you and I will see each other, and even though we don’t remember all of our names, we will remember where we were and the circumstance and we will put our arms around each other and kiss each other. That’s what the scriptures say. God loves you with a love that is beyond our ability to understand, and He wants you in His kingdom to live there forever. All you have to do is want it more than anything else that you can possibly want, and it will be yours. May God bless you.”

How Gentle God’s Commands

Elder Ed Colyer was our speaker March 21, and began his sermon by referring to the conversation between Moses and God as it is recorded in Section 22 of the Doctrine and Covenants. “It appears that Moses was kind of confused, maybe, when he saw all the things that he saw, and he began to ask questions. Then I am going to go to a scripture that is one of my favorites in all of scripture. It’s in the book of Deuteronomy.

Brother Colyer first read excerpts from Doctrine and Covenants 22. “The words of God which he spake unto Moses, at a time when Moses was caught up into an exceeding high mountain, and he saw God face to face, and he talked with him, and the glory of God was upon Moses; therefore Moses could endure his presence. And God spake unto Moses, saying, Behold, I am the Lord God Almighty, and Endless is my name, for I am without beginning of days or end of years; and is not this endless? And behold, thou art my son, wherefore look, and I will show thee the workmanship of

mine hands, but not all; for my works are without end, and also my words, for they never cease;

“And it came to pass, that Moses looked and beheld the world upon which he was created. And as Moses beheld the world, and the ends thereof, and all the children of men, which are and which were created; of the same he greatly marveled, and wondered. And the presence of God withdrew from Moses, that his glory was not upon Moses; and Moses was left unto himself; and as he was left unto himself, he fell unto the earth.

“And it came to pass that Moses called upon God, saying, Tell me, I pray thee, why these things are so, and by what thou madest them? And behold, the glory of God was upon Moses, so that Moses stood in the presence of God, and he talked with him face to face. And the Lord God said unto Moses,’ (and this is key.) ‘For mine own purpose have I made these things. Here is wisdom, and it remaineth in me.’”

“Then going to Deuteronomy. We find that Moses is counseling the Hebrew people. They really haven’t been the kind of people that they should have been. Moses is telling them in the thirtieth chapter of Deuteronomy ‘Thou shalt return and obey the Lord and do all of his commandments this day. And the Lord thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good; for the Lord will again rejoice over thee for good as he rejoiced over thy fathers; if thou shalt hearken unto the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn to the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.’ Later on in the book, Moses says the promise is to the House of Israel, the Hebrew people, ‘I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life,’ After thanking Steven Smith for his musical plea for the holy Spirit to come upon us as the rain and commenting on the volume of his speech, he spoke of his grandson Seth, who at one time had to receive some legal disciplinary action from our Pastor. Seth is now in the air force and struggling with electronics. He has been calling his grandfather for assistance and of late has made very good grades.

“The problem Seth is having is probably the one we have with our scriptures. We come to Sunday school and study the scriptures then promptly forget what we learned in Sunday School. We go home, and come back the next Sunday and when Rob asks us a question, we have a blank stare on our face because we forgot. Seth confided the other day, ‘Grandpa, I have learned one thing. I can’t forget what I learned last week, because what I learned last week builds on this week and what I learned last week and this week builds on next week. That’s the way it is, isn’t it? And that’s life, and if we don’t learn our lessons quite well throughout life, we are going to be found wanting in the end.

“Moses wanted to know, and that was the reason he asked God. How many times have you said, ‘If I could just talk to Jesus, I would ask Him a few questions? ‘Why am I here? What’s my purpose? You know it says, ‘In the beginning God created’. I have often wondered what that means to me. What does it mean to us in the restored church?

“In the eighth Psalm, verse 4 we find the Psalmist telling us that we are endowed to be free. I am paraphrasing here now, We are endowed with freedom to BE - to BECOME. And, as the Psalmist shares with us, it is always necessary for the Creator to be part of our BECOMING. We know who our creator is, but let’s carry that a

little bit farther. In Hamlet Act 2, Scene 2 we find Shakespeare penning these words that I think are quite marvelous. In today's society I think we might have no problem stating that with a little bit of apprehension. 'What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form, in moving, how express and admirable! In action how like an angel!! In apprehension how like a god!! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals!'

"You know, friends, we are created, we are told, to know God and His Christ. If He does not live in and among us then how can we know Him? The Apostle John understood this when he told us in John 17:3, 'And this is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.'

"We are going to take Mom to Little Rock to visit then go on down to Biloxi Mississippi to visit Seth and see if I can help him out in this electronics business. I was trained as an electronic Technician years and years ago and later I taught electronic engineering for ITT. One of the questions I am going to ask him, though, is how can he ever hope to learn electronics, the trade that he has now chosen, if he doesn't also have a relationship with his creator. I think that's important.

God Is Speaking. Are We Listening?

'In Haggai 1:6 we find in these words: 'Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts.' God is speaking to us. We need to be listening. Michelangelo, the story goes, was working on the Sistine Chapel painting. One of his associates went to him and told him the people would not like what he was creating. After some thought Michelangelo replied, 'I am not creating this for their enjoyment. I am creating it for my own enjoyment and pleasure.' How many of us today would look at that painting that Michelangelo created years and years ago and find fault with it?

"Let me give you another example that brings it close to home. My wife loves tomato juice. She doesn't like just any tomato juice. She likes her own canned tomato juice. That boils it right down to something important, friends. Hy Vee Tomato Juice will not do, Del Monte tomato juice won't do, nor any other brand of Tomato Juice. It has to be her canned Tomato Juice!! While we were living up in Lester Stevenson's house on North Silver, you would have seen forty-fifty tomato plants out there with cages around them. That was her doing. Now I like to drink her tomato juice, too, but she really likes it. I could say she loves it. Every year she cans all she can of this stuff and takes great pride in that accomplishment. I am the fly in the ointment for her, because I don't like to do the planting and the hoeing and the picking of the tomatoes. I start complaining after while. When I complain to her about all the work involved she immediately informs me that her tomato juice is not for my enjoyment but for her enjoyment. She makes that very plain to me. She wants me to enjoy her tomato juice, and most of the time I do; but I do not like the ritual of getting the garden prepared and planting the tomatoes according to her instruction, of hoeing the tomatoes according to her instructions. Putting the tomato cages around the tomatoes according to her instructions, and then, by the way, picking them according to her instructions. And when we take them in so they will finish ripening, I have to lay the tomatoes a certain way, according to her instructions, so the tomato juice is all hers, believe me. She does not make tomato juice to please Ed. She makes it to please Jean.

'I'm sure that is what Michelangelo was saying. He didn't create for the enjoyment of other people. He would like for them to enjoy it, but he was really creating it for his own enjoyment. Isn't that what Moses was told - 'For mine own purposes, I have created

mankind and all these things. Now, I want mankind to worship me, and here are the rules, but I created mankind for mine own purposes.' Moses asks his Creator why He created the things He did. He would like to know. Sometimes I would like to know, too. God said, 'For mine own purposes I have done this. God's answer was the same answer Michelangelo's, and exactly the same and Jean's concerning her tomato juice. I'm going to paraphrase it. He said, 'I did not create mankind to please mankind. I created mankind to please Myself. In that process it is My desire that my Creation know and worship Me; but, Ed has his agency.' Alan has his agency. You all have your agency.

Freedom Comes With Choices Within God's Will

"Men retain their freedom spiritually, morally, intellectually, and every other way we can imagine as long as they make choices within the framework of God's will. When we step outside of that framework, though, our freedom is lost. Let me give you another example. I spent twenty years in the navy. Jean followed me everywhere I went if it wasn't aboard ship. The last ten years we spent in Norfolk, Virginia. The church there was an old frame house literally cross the street from a set of railroad tracks. Brother Paul Dillon was our Pastor. We arrived in Norfolk in 1972, looked up the address of the church and went to church on a communion Sunday. We walked in and there were a man and a woman, two boys and a girl. The minute we walked in the door, the man got up, walked across, shook my hand and said, 'Hi!. I'm Paul Dillon, the Pastor. What office of the Priesthood do you hold?' He didn't even ask me what my name was!

"I said, 'I'm Ed Colyer and I am a Deacon.' He says, 'That's wonderful! You offer the invocation, the benediction, the offertory, and I'll take care of everything else.' That was our introduction to the church in Norfolk. We probably drove about as far as from here to Lamoni to get to the church, and a lot of people in that outlying area didn't have a way to get there. We had our Volkswagen, VW bus. So we would make the trip to the church picking up people, and we would pick up a lot of people.

"I had a tape player in my VW van, and I remember going to church this one Sunday morning playing 'Hymns of the Restoration', hymns that the conference had sung. The particular hymn I was listening to was, 'How Gentle God's Commands'. During the singing of that hymn, and everybody was talking around me, I was somehow caught up, and I don't know how I got from where I was to the church. As the congregation sang, 'How gentle God's commands. How kind His precepts are. Come, cast your burden on the Lord and trust His constant care.' I heard a voice and I was made to know that that very morning there was going to be a call to the Priesthood presented to the branch and I was supposed to support that priesthood call.

"We arrived at the church, had Sunday School. Nothing happened. Had I misinterpreted what I had heard? Church was about to start, Brother Paul Dillon walked to the front, stood behind the pulpit and with tears in his eyes, he says, 'I would like for you to support the call of Mike Tait to the office of Priest.' In that moment he stood and made that announcement, I felt a burning inside. I KNEW, that was exactly what I was being asked to support. as I listened to the singing of the hymn, 'How Gentle God's Commands. How kind His precepts are!' I KNEW!! I knew! And I have wondered many times if maybe that is not the answer for which we are looking. I'm sure that Moses would have accepted that.

"In John 16:12 Christ had this to say, 'I have yet many things

to say unto you but you cannot bear them now'. We cannot bear what Christ has to say to us because of our inadequacy - because of our unpreparatory state, friends. Think about it. How many of you have had similar experiences where your bosom burned within, and you knew - you knew what the answer was? We find that in Matthew 4:4 Jesus had this to say, 'Live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God'. That's a tough job! It's hard.

These Heard and Followed God's Gentle Command

"But let me ask you this. What would have happened if Columbus had not heeded the Spirit in his day and had gone his own way? He had his agency, didn't he? He could have refused. The Book of Mormon tells us about him and his assigned responsibility in First Nephi. Columbus was assigned that task even before he was born, at least 600 years prior to Christ. The Book of Mormon is not the only testimony of Columbus though. Santayana was not a religious person, closer to an agnostic probably, and yet the Spirit of God caused him to leave us with this important message about Columbus: 'Columbus found a world and had no chart, save one that faith deciphered in the skies; to trust the soul's invincible surmise was his science and his only art.' Columbus was driven by a Spirit that wants to communicate with us. He followed the gentle command that God had that we sing about in hymn #345.

"Many years ago, the Pilgrims assembled in Holland ready to leave for the new world. They were confused, concerned. Their leader, John Robinson, a minister, as he stood to address them before going aboard ship he said these prophetic words, and we sing that hymn every now and again, too, 'I am very confident the Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth from His word.' We sing that with conviction, don't we? You know it as, 'We limit not the truth of God.'

Will Ed Colyer listen though? That's the question. Will the rest of this group listen? Or, are we going to be like I used to be, and maybe still am? I used to run, and maybe sometimes today I run! And there are times when I want to run as fast as I can run in the other direction. Many years ago, I was aboard the aircraft carrier Kittyhawk. We were in the South China Sea. Viet Nam was going on. I was very rebellious. I went down to the library, and for some reason, I picked up a book of poems. It hadn't been too many years before that Valle's father taught me algebra, trigonometry and geometry at Lamoni, and I did everything that I could to get out of literature classes, believe me! Yet I went down to the library and picked up this book of poems. There was this poem called 'The Hound of Heaven', a poem by Francis Thompson that opened my eyes to a lot. We'll read it later today.

"Years and years ago, we lived in Kansas City. I was maybe four or so. Mom says I would lie in the bed with my knees drawn up and one leg crossed over the other and I would be carrying on a conversation, a real conversation, and she became concerned about me. It sounded to her like I was playing some kind of a game or something, but these were real conversations. So one day Mom asked me to whom I was talking. I replied, 'The angels!' So she asked me again, 'Who are you talking to?' I said, 'The angels.' Kind of curious now, she says, 'Well, where are they?' 'In heaven.' 'What does heaven look like?' My reply was, 'It's a pretty place.' That's the only way, she says, that I could describe it. I am convinced that during that period of time, I was taught from on high. I literally believe to this day I was being taught the Restoration Gospel and I literally believe I knew the Book of Mormon before being taught all about it in Davis City several years later after we moved to that place when my parents were divorced. I've never had

any question about the Restoration gospel. I've never had any question about the Book of Mormon. I've never had any question at all, and yet as I got older, guess what Ed Colyer did! He did the same thing that Francis Thompson did. He ran!

"Alexander Pope had this to say about the human race in his poem titled Essay on Man, 'Created half to rise and half to fall; sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled; the glory, jest, and riddle of the world!' From Adam to Noah to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Lehi, Nephi, Alma Mosiah, Mormon, Joseph Jr., we have continued to be the glory, jest and riddle of the world. And I would say that even today we are moreso the glory, the jest and riddle of the world. And to be right honest with you, I am very concerned about the state that we are in today, not only as a nation, but as a people.

Rebelling Brings Suffering

"There have been many times in my life where I have known the path I was to go but argued about it. For some reason I like to rebel. Many years ago I was asked to speak at Davis City. Bill Ballantyne was Pastor and had asked me to speak; and, oh, did I rebel! Bob Ballantyne, Jean's father said to Jean, 'A man shouldn't have to suffer like that.' I didn't want to turn Bill down, but I was inadequate. I couldn't do it! And oh, did I rebel and did I suffer, and Bob saw it.

"Several months later I was on a cruise to Japan, this time it was a nine month cruise, aboard the same aircraft carrier, the Kittyhawk. I was afraid, lonely, mad at the world. I went to that same ship's library, and offered a prayer. What am I to do? I went back to my bed, and I was awakened that night and told to read Section 13 in the Doctrine and Covenants. Do you think I Did? Not on your life! And the next night as I lay down, I fell asleep and was awakened again and told to read Section 13 in the Doctrine and Covenants. And I didn't do it! The third time it happened, though, I got up and got the Doctrine and Covenants out and read section 13. My name is John Edward, and I am called Ed, or around Lamoni often Eddie; and that's key to what I am going to tell you now. As I opened up the Doctrine and Covenants to read Section 13, the first four words are, 'Hearken my servant John'. It wasn't 'Hearken my servant Ed', or 'Hearken my servant Eddie'. I hadn't read the Doctrine and Covenants from the time my mother got it for me. It was a zippered set, and the zipper was so rusty I could hardly get it opened." 'Section 13', our speaker mused. 'Hearken my servant John'! So there's another instance where, like Moses, I was questioning and I found an answer, but those were tough days! It took 3 times, folks, and 3 days for me to respond! On day three I arose in the middle of the night and opened up the book to section 13 to see these four words imprinted upon the page; and I was to preach nothing but repentance to the Saints. Nothing flattering, nothing they might want or desire to hear - just repentance! I am only now beginning to understand and obey that instruction.

When We Listen, Good Comes

"I found in that book of poems a lot of poems that I like, but Edwin Markham had one that I really like. He says: 'I will leave man to make the fateful guess, will leave him torn between the 'no' and the 'yes', leave him unresting until he rests in Me, drawn upward by the choice that makes him free--- leave him in tragic loneliness to choose, with all in life to win or all to lose.'

"We are drawn sometimes to do things that don't make sense. Where I last worked there was a lady who worked in the temporary service. Theresa was always at work early. Her husband dropped her off and she went right to work at 6:30 AM. By 7:00 AM when

I got to work, she would always be there. This one day Theresa was crying. When I asked her what is going on she really breaks down and tells me her father has a 75% blockage on one side and a 100% blockage on the other side of his heart and they were going to have to operate on him. Then she told me that just three weeks earlier she had lost her mother. She was pretty emotional now. Her father is 72 years old and has to have the operation or he will die; with it he may have several more years to live.

“About 2:00 PM that afternoon she comes by my office and leaves a glass of water on the desk. She as to go out into the factory but cannot take anything to drink out on the factory floor. On the way back she stopped to tell me they were going to do a balloon on her father the very next day. She said her father was deteriorating fast and they needed to do this to build his oxygen level up or the operation would be off. With tears in her eyes she broke down and began to sob. I had her sit down in my office and then I closed the door so she could cry in private. You know what, I found myself crying along with Theresa for some reason. I didn’t know her, but I was crying with her.

“The next day her father had the operation. She came back to work the following day. She was happy and all smiles. The operation was a grand success. The doctors were even surprised, she tells me, that at his age and condition he would recover so fast. The next Monday morning, though, she was missing from work. A day or two later I find at the copy machine, somebody had left an obituary of her father’s death. A few days later she came back at work. About 10:00 AM I saw her at the copy machine and asked her the particulars of her father’s death. As she told me she started crying, and guess who else started crying! I went to crying with her. Do you know what she asked me as I stood there by the copy machine crying with her? She says, ‘John, could I have a hug? That would help so much!’ So I gave her a big hug and pretty soon there were several others standing around watching us, and they were crying, too. She left a few days later. I still don’t know her last name but I do know she’s OK. And I do know, or I feel strongly, that once again the Lord stepped in and intervened at a time of need.

“We are going to struggle and face a lot of changes and a lot of challenges. Some of them we will like. Some we won’t. I hope I don’t continue to be like I was in my younger days. That doesn’t say that I won’t. I want to read to you some few passages from Francis Thompson this morning because I think this boils it down to what Ed Colyer is and has been through an experience with the up-down struggle that I have had, and sometimes the up-down struggle that I continue to have.

The Hound Of Heaven by Francis Thompson

I fled Him, down the nights & down the days; I fled Him, down the arches of the years; I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears I hid from Him, & under running laughter.

Up vistaed hopes I sped; And shot, precipitated, Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears, From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.

But with unhurrying chase, And unperturbed pace, Deliberate speed, majestic instancy, They beat & a Voice beat More instant than the Feet----- And the voice said, ‘All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.’

I pleaded, outlaw wise, By many a hearted casement, curtained red,

Trellised with intertwining charities. For though I knew His love who followed,

Yet was I sore adread lest, having Him, I must have naught beside; But, if one little casement parted wide, The gust of His approach would clash it to; Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pursue.

Across the margin of the world I fled, And troubled the gold gateways of the stars; Smiting for the shelter of their changed bars;

Fretted to dulcet jars And silvern chatter the pearl parts O, the moon. I said to Dawn: ‘Be sudden’ To Eve: ‘Be Soon’;

With thy young sky blossoms heap me over From this tremendous Lover Float thy vague veil over about me, lest He see!

“I wanted to hide, and so did Francis Thompson. I wanted the day to be over. I wanted the morning to be here fast and I wanted the day to end fast! He says:

‘I tempted all His servitors, but to find My own betrayal in their constancy, In faith to Him their fickleness to me, Their traitorous trueness, & their loyal deceit.

To all swift things for swiftness did I sue; Clung to the whistling mane of every wind. But whether they swept, smoothly fleet, The long savannahs of the blue; Or whether, thunder driven,

They changed His chariot thwart a heaven, Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn O their feet: Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.

Still with unhurrying chase, And unperturbed pace, Deliberate speed, majestic instancy, Came on the following Feet, And a Voice sounded above their beat, ‘Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me.’

That voice is round me like a bursting sea: ‘And is thy earth so marred,

Shattered in shard on shard? Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fleest Me! Strange, piteous, futile thing you are!

Wherefore should any set thee love apart? Seeing none but I makes of naught He said, ‘And human love needs human meriting:

How has thou merited this day? Of all man’s clotted clay the dingiest clot? Alack, thou knowest not How little worthy of any love thou art!

Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee Save Me, save only Me?

All which I took from thee I did but take, Not for thy harm, But just that thou mightest seek it in MY arms. All which thy child’s mistake Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home: Rise, clasp My hand and come!

I am He whom thou seekest! Thou drawest love from those who draw love from Me.”

Call a Solemn Assembly

During the service on March 28, 2004 Elder Steven Smith called the congregation to worship with the reading from Psalms 50 “The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.”

Following the singing of “Fairest Lord Jesus”, Elder Michael Jordison rose to read two scriptures: the 61st chapter of Isaiah “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion; to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the

garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your ploughmen and your vinedressers. But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord; men shall call you the Ministers of our God; ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion; therefore in their land they shall possess the double; everlasting joy shall be unto them. For I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people; all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.”

And from Exodus 29:35-46: “... Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually. The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even; And with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of a hin of wine for a drink offering. And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shalt do thereto according to the meat offering of the morning, and according to the drink offering thereof, for a sweet savor, an offering made by fire unto the Lord. This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord, where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee. And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory...”

Following the reading of the scriptures, the beautiful, clear voice of Sue Beck sang the meaningful hymn, “I’d Rather Have Jesus Than Anything”.

As Brother Jordison took his place to deliver the sermon, he stated “What a powerful song that is.” He asked how many of us can say that -- ‘we’d rather have Jesus more than anything’ -- more than our homes, our riches, our cars, our jobs, our families, our friends? And if we say it, how many of us live it?

The Presence of the Lord

“As I considered what to share with you this morning, my mind has been directed of late to a certain topic. I pray and hope that what the Lord has shared with me will be conveyed to you this morning. I feel very strongly that the Lord wants to speak to us and wants to share with us some things. I shared with you from the book of Exodus a portion of what the Levite priests were commanded to do to sanctify the Tabernacle when Moses gave the law to them. They were to prepare a sacrifice for the altar of the Tabernacle which was to house His presence. They were to offer a meat offering and a drink offering that His Glory -- his Kawbod -- would dwell there. And not that He would just dwell there, but that he would meet the congregation and speak with them. And shouldn’t we too yearn to have Him meet with us and speak to us these days in like manner?

“ This morning I would like you to recall the beginnings of what we call the restoration movement. In September 1823, the young Joseph Smith, Jr. was awakened in his bed three times by the messenger Moroni, who along with other things, shared with him some select scriptures: parts of the 3rd and 4th chapters of Malachi, Isaiah 11, Acts 3 and Joel 28-32 which says: “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered; for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.

“The messenger went on to say that this passage was not yet, but soon to be fulfilled and that the time of the fullness of the Gentiles was about to come in. Rob (Rolfe) asked me what I was going to speak about today, and I told him I was going to talk about Joel. He wanted to know what the name Joel meant, so I looked it up. ‘Joel’ means ‘Yahweh is God’. (Not Baal or one of the other false Gods worshiped by the pagans – but Yahweh, the Hebrew God – the One True God.) To give you a little time reference, Joel lived around 850 B.C. This would have been about 80 years after the kingdom was divided (after Solomon) into Israel and Judah; and about 130 years before the Assyrians scattered Israel and 250 years before Babylon conquered Judah.

“I looked in Church History, Times and Seasons and a lot of other Latter Day Saint publications about the book of Joel, and every single reference I could find referred to this passage in the second chapter, quoted by Moroni. I would like to take us back though to the first chapter. I believe that Joel was written for our day, and not just the part about our ‘sons and daughters prophesy-ing’.

Israel and Her Branches Made Desolate

Brother Jordison then started at Joel 1:1-4 “‘The word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Pethuel. Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.’ Brother Jordison further stated: “He wants this to be passed down. There is a reason for this. Pass it down through your generations so we can have this today! “ He continued reading Joel 1:5-12, “Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth. For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are as the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion. He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree; he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white. Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth. The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the Lord; the priests, the Lord’s ministers, mourn. The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted; the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat

and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished. The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered; because joy is withered away from the sons of men.”

“You can get a real sense in your mind of what he is talking about -- this desolation in the land. What I would like you to consider this morning, is that ‘my land’ refers also to the Americas, as well as Palestine. If you recall, many times the Book of Mormon says (Ether 1:35) ‘Behold this a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it, shall be freefrom all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, which is Jesus Christ. . . .’ I believe that this is His land, a choice land. ‘For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are as the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion. He hath laid my vine waste. . . .’

“ I know in Rob’s class you have been talking about a branch which came over the wall, (the ocean) and settled here in the Americas. I believe Joel is referring to the Gentiles with their Babylonian influences (strong nation with the teeth of a lion) coming in and scattering the remnant of the House of Israel here in America, as well as the other places in the vineyard (world). Alma 14.:126 says ‘Yea, blessed is the name of my God, who has been mindful of this people, who are a branch of the tree of Israel, and has been lost from its body, in a strange land. . . .’

“When Joel prophesied this, it was still several hundred years from fulfillment. But now we can see it’s fulfillment. I’m going to skip a couple of verses and go to verse 15 -20 (Joel 1). ‘Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is at hand (now that should clue you in right there, the day of the Lord he is referring to is the last days – our day.) Joel paints a pretty desolate picture of what will happen to the Jews in the last days. The temple is gone (‘The meat and the drink offering are withholden’) therefore God’s glory cannot dwell with his people in His Tabernacle. His vine, and his branches are laid desolate and barren. As in the parable of Zenos (Jacob 3), the plantings have all become wild.

A Great Army

“After the bleak picture he’s painted of the condition of Jewish ‘vine’, he goes on, starting at the 2nd chapter: ‘Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand’ He’s still referring here to the last days. He’s going to tell you about an army that’s coming and I want you to listen to the description of this army. ‘. . . a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be anymore after it, even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth; the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them. The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. Before their face the people shall be much pained; all faces shall gather blackness. They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march everyone on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks; Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk everyone in his path; and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded. They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief.’

“I’d like you to compare this army where ‘a fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth’ with what Moroni told Joseph Smith that night in his room. He quoted Malachi, but when he got to the 4th chapter, he quoted it a little bit different than it reads in the Bible. He said, ‘For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall burn as stubble; for they that cometh shall burn them saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.’ Who is this army? Who is this referring to? I’ll give you a hint. Look at the very end of the second chapter of Joel.

“This prophecy of Malachi was evidently so important that Jesus commanded the Nephites to put it in their scriptures, and he read it and explained it to them. It’s unfortunate that we don’t have his full explanation of it in our account yet. Who is this army? Turn to 3 Nephi 7:38-41. Listen and see if you can figure out who this army is. ‘But if the Gentiles will repent, and return unto me, saith the Father, behold, they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel; And I will not suffer my people, who are of the house of Israel, to go through among them, and tread them down, saith the Father. But if they will not turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, I will suffer them, yea, I will suffer my people, O house of Israel, that they shall go through among them, and shall tread them down, And they shall be as salt that hath lost its savor, which is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of my people, O house of Israel.’

“Now let me just read the next part of Malachi. ‘But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this. . . .’ Notice the parallel imagery of being trodden underfoot. Now again, from 3 Nephi 9:47-53 ‘Ye remember that I spake unto you, and said that when the words of Isaiah should be fulfilled, behold they are written, ye have them before you; therefore search them. And verily, verily I say unto you, that when they shall be fulfilled, then is the fulfilling of the covenant which the Father hath made unto his people. O house of Israel, and then shall the remnants which shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth, be gathered in from the east, and from the west, and from the south, and from the north; and they shall be brought to the knowledge of the Lord their God, who hath redeemed them. And the Father hath commanded me that I should give unto you this land, for your inheritance. And I say unto you, that if the Gentiles do not repent, after the blessing which they shall receive, after they have scattered my people, then shall ye who are a remnant of the house of Jacob, go forth among them; And ye shall be in the midst of them, who shall be many; and ye shall be among them, as a lion among the beasts of the forests, and as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he goeth through, both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. Thy hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off.’

“Did you get it that time? Evidently they didn’t, or it was so important that Jesus needed to tell them 3 times. It’s evidently important that we know this as well. 3 Nephi 9:98-106 says: ‘Therefore it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not believe in my words, who am Jesus Christ, whom the Father shall cause him to bring forth unto the Gentiles, and shall give unto him power that he shall bring them forth unto the Gentiles, (it shall be done even as Moses said,) they shall be cut off from among my people who are of the covenant; And my people who are a remnant of Jacob, shall

be among the Gentiles, yea, in the midst of them, as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he go through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. Their hand shall be lifted up upon their adversaries, and all their enemies shall be cut off. Yea, wo be unto the Gentiles, except they repent, for it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Father, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, (remember this army you heard about in Joel) and I will destroy thy chariots, and I will cut off the cities of thy land and throw down all thy strongholds; And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thy hand, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers: Thy graven images I will also cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the works of thy hands; And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee; so will I destroy thy cities. And it shall come to pass that all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and priestcrafts and whoredoms, shall be done away. For it shall come to pass, saith the Father, that at that day, whosoever will not repent and come unto my beloved Son, them will I cut off from among my people, O house of Israel,.....' Have you figured out who the army is?

"Mormon wanted to make sure that we got Christ's message, because he reiterates the message in Mormon 2:51-54: 'And then, O ye Gentiles, how can ye stand before the power of God, except ye shall repent and turn from your evil ways! Know ye not that ye are in the hands of God? Know ye not that he hath all power, and at his great command the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll? Therefore repent ye, and humble yourselves before him, lest he shall come out in justice against you; lest a remnant of the seed of Jacob shall go forth among you as a lion, and tear you in pieces, and there is none to deliver.'

It's pretty important, I'd say, for us to know. Why do you suppose he wants us to know this? It says in Amos 3:7 'Surely the Lord God will do nothing, until he revealeth the secret unto his servants the prophets.' He is fortelling us because he doesn't want us to be trodden down by the remnant of Jacob. He wants us to repent.

A Call for Repentance in Humility for Restoration

"In the midst of what is going on, Joel points out a way of escape. Joel 1:13-14 says 'Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests; howl, ye ministers of the altar; come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God; for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God. Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord, Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.'

"And again.....Joel 2:12 'Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; And rend your heart, and not your garments, and repent, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and he will turn away the evil from you. Therefore repent, and who knoweth but he will return and leave a blessing behind him; that you may offer a meat offering, and a drink offering, unto the Lord your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts; let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.' He's not referring to Levitical sacrifices. He says 'rend your hearts and not your garments'.

"David in Psalm 51 admits that God 'desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart...'. He is referring to a condition of our hearts-- a sanctification of our selves-- so that, just as in the Tabernacle, the sacrifice of the meat and drink offering allowed His glory to dwell with the congregation, His Spirit would dwell and speak with the people because of the sacrifice made at the door of their hearts.

"Joel goes on in chapter 2:23-32 'Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God; for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God that hath dealt wondrously with you; and my people shall never be ashamed. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God,' (that's what he told the Israelites at the door -- I am the Lord your God that delivered you out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God... Exodus 29) 'And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God...' Because of the repentance of Israel, their years of desolations would be erased. The 'great army' sent to judge Judah, beginning with Babylon (the palmerworm), was the servant of God. And now it's desolations were ended and it's effects were being wiped away.

"This might just sound like a bunch of repentance talk to you (and it is), but there's a point to it. What is supposed to be our response now? Here in the Americas, the Branch has been scattered and laid waste (the remnant of Jacob by the Gentiles). Something is going to happen soon. The remnant of Jacob is going to come and scatter the Gentiles as a lion among the flocks of sheep. I can't help but recall the verse, "My sheep hear and know My voice" and think that this is a nudge to the Gentile church of our day. And if we don't want that to happen to us, then we need to 'Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; Gather the people' (together). (Joel 2:15) Listen to this: 'sanctify the congregation' (the congregation is not just this group right here in Mt. Ayr, the congregation is everybody of Israel, of the sheep that hear. 'Assemble the elders' (assemble the priesthood) 'Gather the children, and those that suck the breasts;' This 'assembly', this 'fast' is for everybody to be a part of (from oldest down to youngest) --all of us are supposed to humble ourselves. And then he says, 'let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.' --a reference to the marriage of Christ to the church. That marriage should be what we desire most! So again, what must we do to get there?" (Brother Ron Smith chimed in with 'We have to get out of the closet'.) Brother Jordison agreed and continued "Every person, whether you are a nominal member--come once on Easter and Christmas -- or come every day, has to be humble. We've got to fast, to pray together, and to repent, as a people. Why? Because of what's coming!

"Section 108: 'Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the Lord your God, and hear the word of the Lord concerning you; the Lord who shall suddenly come to his temple; the Lord who shall come down upon the world with a curse to judgment; yea, upon all the nations that forget God, and upon all the ungodly among you. For he shall make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of their God.

Wherefore prepare ye, prepare ye, O my people; sanctify yourselves; gather ye together, O ye people of my church, upon the land of Zion, all you that have not been commanded to tarry. Go ye out from Babylon. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. Call your solemn assemblies, and speak often one to another. . . . The time has come when the voice of the Lord is unto you, Go ye out of Babylon. . . . Send forth the elders of my church unto the nations which are afar off; unto the islands of the sea; send forth unto foreign lands; call upon all nations; firstly, upon the Gentiles, and then upon the Jews. And. . . this shall be their cry, and the voice of the Lord unto all people: Go ye forth unto the land of Zion, that the borders of my people may be enlarged, and that her stakes may be strengthened, and that Zion may go forth unto the regions round about; yea, let the cry go forth among all people: Awake and arise and go forth to meet the Bridegroom. Behold, and lo, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. Prepare yourselves for the great day of the Lord. . . . Go ye out from among the nations, even from Babylon, from the midst of wickedness, which is spiritual Babylon.'

"There many references to coming out of Babylon. The Apostle John says it this way in Rev. 18:4: 'And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people,' (come out of Babylon, the harlot) 'that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.' The Lord is calling his people (us) to come out of Babylon (wickedness – sin) so that we're not partakers of her plagues. Again, the Book of Mormon says clearly that when the remnant comes forth, if we will repent, we won't be numbered among the Gentiles (the heathen) who are scattered.

"'Come out of her sins. . . .' What are her sins? Jesus tells us in 3Nephi 7:34-35: 'And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you, At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations. . . .'

"The early church was called to be a voice of warning to the nations. The church was told in Sec 85:19, 'Remember the great and last promise which I have made unto you: cast away your idle thoughts and your excess of laughter far from you; tarry ye, tarry ye in this place, and call a solemn assembly, even of those who are the first laborers in this last kingdom; and let those whom they have warned in their traveling, call on the Lord, and ponder the warning in their hearts which they have received, for a little season.' And in DC85:22a, 'Behold, I sent you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh every man who hath been warned, to warn his neighbor; therefore, they are left without excuse, and their sins are upon their own heads.'

"If we aren't warning, where do the sins of the unwarned lie? On our heads. This church was called forth in Sec 1:4a, 'Wherefore I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jr., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments, and also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world;' This church was brought forth to be a voice of warning! I had never thought of it that way before. We talk about the church bringing forth the fullness of the gospel. I suppose that the fullness of the gospel is a little bit like salvation." Brother Jordison indicated that we pick from different scriptures and say,

we are saved by faith here, faith and works there, grace in another place, and by baptism in yet another place. "According to the scriptures there are a lot of ways to be saved, but they are all mutually inclusive of salvation. The fullness of the gospel is like that, comprised of many elements all pointing to one common point.

The Fullness of the Gospel – Restoration of Israel

"Sec. 39, given in 1838 was addressed to James Covill, a Baptist minister who was not a part of the church. This was one revelation not received for one of the new faith. I make this point, because as one only investigating the movement, he was more than likely unaware of just what the fullness of the Gospel was. And so the Lord gives him an understanding of just what this church was about: He was told that if he would accept the gospel (obey the ordinances of the church), he would be prepared for a greater work. It is then stated in verse 3e that 'Thou shalt preach the fullness of my gospel which I have sent forth in these last days; the covenant which I have sent forth to recover my people, which are of the house of Israel.' I think that this is the crux of the fullness of the gospel. All the latter day work is aimed at the fulfillment of that verse: the restoration of the house of Israel.

" The gospel, as Jesus defines it, is the message of the cross and his resurrection; and the salvation of mankind through faith, repentance and the remission of sins through baptism of fire and the holy Ghost. And that salvation only comes to those of the house of Israel. That's why this church was brought forth in these days. Not so that we would have a corner on the truth or feel proud that we are a part of His church and heirs to Zion. Are we on the verge of many today? Have we thanked the Jews and blessed them? 2 Nephi 12:50 'O ye Gentiles, have ye remembered the Jews, mine ancient covenant people?'

" Have you ever considered the Jews--what they have gone through in their five thousand years of existence.? What other nation on earth (the Book of Mormon says that there was no other nation that would crucify their God) would endure the things that the Jews have endured and still trust in the Lord their God. God gave them a special blessing because he knew that after they crucified Jesus, they were going to need it, because they would scattered and smitten. And He told them, (paraphrased) 'Because I have anointed you to sacrifice my son, I'm going to give you a special blessing - - I'm going to re-gather you. You are going to be the salvation of the world on two hands. On one, because you crucified Christ who is the salvation of the world. And on the other, in the last days you are going to be the salvation of the world, because I'm going to use you to gather all of my people together and build My Zion. This church is founded on that principle --not on the restoration of the priesthood, not just on bringing forth the Book of Mormon or the establishing of the church in 1830. These are all means by which the fullness of the gospel can be realized --that God can remember His covenants and re-gather all of His people, every single one of them. "I want to share a couple more things. At first when I heard about the Patriarch's call for us to have a general assembly, I honestly didn't have confirmation that that was a valid call, until the Lord opened my eyes. It's not just the general assembly where we can come together and worship the Lord. It's the solemn assembly spoken of by the prophet Joel where we come before Him in the depths of humility; we come prepared: fasting and praying more than we ever have. And not just those who are the most active in our congregations, but every soul who comes through our doors; looking forward to something happening.

An Experience of Warning

“ There was a priesthood member who was involved in an adulterous relationship. One day the Lord spoke to Priest Jim, and said ‘I want you to go and tell my servant that what he is doing is wrong and he needs to repent.’ And Jim didn’t go. Days went by and the voice of the Lord came again to Jim and said ‘I want you to go and tell my servant to repent’. And Jim didn’t go. And a third time the voice of the Lord came and said ‘I want you to go and tell my servant to repent, to stop doing what he is doing’. And Jim didn’t go. That night, he was awakened, with a vision where he saw his wife sitting on the floor. Their oldest child lay on the floor with her head in her mother’s lap. She was breathing with great difficulty and Jim knew that she was near her last breath. He was overcome with emotion for fear of losing her, and feeling the great love that he had for her. Suddenly there appeared a light in the room which grew brighter, until Christ stood in the room. Jim looked at Him and Jesus pointed and said: ‘Behold My child’. Jim turned and looked; and there, in the place of his own child, was this man who was in the adulterous relationship. Jesus said ‘This is my child too, and I love him. Go and tell him.’

“You can probably guess the outcome of that experience. It’s a type for our response. We are to be a voice of warning. If you look back in all the publications and periodicals of the church, you will read over and over again warnings, things that are coming; and it’s our responsibility to share that with the world. It’s our responsibility to take the light of Christ and salvation to them, so they, too, can escape the judgments. Not because God wants to judge them (wants to consign them to outer darkness), but because they choose that.

“There are certain things that we need to consider. Sec. 85:36-38 says: ‘Call your solemn assembly, as I have commanded you; and as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom;...Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing, and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God; that your incomings may be in the name of the Lord; that your outgoings may be in the name of the Lord; that all your salutations may be in the name of the Lord, with uplifted hands unto the Most High. Therefore cease from all your light speeches, from all laughter, from all your lustful desires, from all your pride and light-mindedness, and from all your wicked doings....See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires; cease to be idle; cease to be unclean; cease to find fault one with another; cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated; and above all things, clothe yourselves with the bonds of charity, as with a mantle, which is a bond of perfectness and peace; pray always, that you may not faint until I come; behold, and lo, I will come quickly, and receive you unto myself.’

“Look around you. We’re all a little bit different and we may feel closer to some than others. But remember: The Lord has chosen each of us--we who are here right now-- to be a part of this work, together. At this time, during the unfolding of great world events, He is calling us, with our limitations, our failings, and our weaknesses to work together in love and faithfulness. We need to be admonishing one another, in Love, to be perfect. We don’t have to worry about what is going on in Independence or Canada, or across the world, as much as we need to be concerned about Mt. Ayr - as the church where we are, and about becoming sanctified as a people, as a congregation. All of us, especially our children (no matter what

age), need to know and be instructed and taught the right ways (and of the coming judgements). When we are in our services, when we’re preparing for services, and when we fast, are we only skipping a meal before hand as we’ve been asked by the Patriarchs? Or are we actually taking that time we would be eating to prepare for that service, to condition ourselves? It is conditioning that is going to usher us into the Kingdom. We are supposed to sanctify ourselves as a congregation so we can be a part of this solemn or general assembly and meet the Lord there with His glory, where He will speak to us. Otherwise, He will either not speak to us or He will consume us with fire, if we are not prepared.

“Have you ever thought about what we should be doing right now? Seriously, take a minute right now and ponder, ‘what is it that I am supposed to be doing in my life for the Lord right now? What is He pleading with me about? What sins would He point out that need repenting of?’ We can keep going the way we’re going (and perhaps on one level we’re doing pretty good), but we’re supposed to be doing a lot better, individually and as a congregation.

“I am going to leave you with the words of Alma 10:27-29 ‘And now my brethren, I wish from the inmost part of my heart, yea, with great anxiety, even unto pain, that ye would hearken unto my words, and cast off your sins, and not procrastinate the day of your repentance; But that ye would humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear, and thus be led by the Holy Spirit, becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long suffering; having faith on the Lord; Having a hope that ye shall receive eternal life; having the love of God always in your hearts, that ye may be lifted up at the last day, and enter into his rest;’

News & Notes

Special Easter Services

Several special activities are planned for the period leading up to Easter and on Easter Sunday in the Mount Ayr Restoration Branch.

We will be participation in Breakfast With The Master breakfasts at the First Christian Church in Mount Ayr Monday, April 5 through Saturday, April 10. Monday, April 5, is the day that we help the First Christian Church group with clean up. Thursday, April 8, we provide greeters, Jan Jordison will be playing the piano and Alan Smith will be the speaker. Breakfasts begin at 6:30 a.m. with devotions at 6:55 a.m. The theme this year is "Wonderful Words of Life."

There will be a community Good Friday service on Friday, April 9, but details were not available at the newsletter deadline.

On Easter Sunday we will have a breakfast at 9 a.m., followed by the regular schedule of services.

Plan to come and share with us in worship as we remember the death of Christ for us, and the excitement of his resurrection.

Date Set For Elders’ Conference

The 2004 Elders Conference is to convene at Independence, Mo. on April 3 and continue through the following week. The Elders’ Conference is not a legislative body in the sense that it governs the activities of any Restoration group or groups. Its purpose is for edification and unification of the Saints in their efforts to follow the Master. Classes and worship experiences are offered for all ages. Registration is asked only so there can be adequate preparation of

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

News & Notes

facilities and food. Registration forms are available on line through centerplace.org or from Tidings of Zion or by contacting the Conference of Restoration elders, P.O. Box 4085, Independence, Mo 64051-4085. The site of the conference is the Waldo Avenue Restoration church and Centerplace Restoration School just off River Blvd. at Waldo Avenue a few blocks north of the Auditorium.

Women's Retreat Day

A women's retreat day will be held Saturday, April 17. Look for more details in announcements at church.

Youth Continue to Achieve

Colleen Wilcoxson's group placed second with their History Day project at Graceland. Their skit was "An Amish Encounter". They will be going to the State competition with their presentation.

Aquila Galusha won first place in Pee Wee wrestling at Lamoni and qualified for the state competition.

Heidi Winkler is on the first all0conference basketball team, and was chosen to play in the Iowa coaches' All Star games at Mt. Mercy College in Cedar Rapids April 4. Heidi also was a member of the Spanish Club that spent Spring Break in Mexico.

Jared Beck was recently in the school play "Yard Sale - Cheap!" and received two division I ratings at the state speech contest. He will also be traveling to Europe this summer with a youth choir.

Communion Plans Told

Plans are underway for a communion service to be held at the Auditorium in Independence, Missouri, on April 25 to which all Restoration congregations are invited. Preparations are being made under the supervision of the Restoration Pastors in Zion.