

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

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If the parallel's not real obvious...

The account of the great famine in Egypt recorded in Genesis could well be predictive of our own nation and time. At the time of the writing, Egypt was the most powerful nation in the known world. It was the leader in culture, science, education and most of all, the "bread-basket" of the world.

Joseph, son of Jacob, interpreted the two dreams of the Pharaoh, telling him of bad times to come, and what should be done to prepare. It should be noted that when the bad times arrived, no one was exempt, including the beneficiaries of Abraham's covenant. It is likely that many of the people, during the seven years of abundance, thought it was foolishness to prepare for the bad times that Joseph said were just around the corner.

Notice that Joseph didn't say, "let each family prepare and save food for the times ahead". Apparently, human nature was the same in those days, as it is today. Most Americans today, are spending everything they make each year, plus a little more. We presume that things will continue to be the same as the year before. So, after seven years, the famine arrived.

What is most interesting to me is the method Joseph chose to distribute food during the famine. He didn't just give it away. (No government safety net.) The Israelites had to pay, just like the Egyptians, but the grain was sold at a fair price. When the people ran out of money, they proposed (not he) that

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TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

The Holy Spirit, Theme of Two Ordinances

As the service opened on Sunday, July 4, Pastor Robert Rolfe spoke to the newly baptized young man who was to receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost:

"Aguila, I'm going to be talking to you, today. The rest of the Saints can listen, but what I am going to say is for you. Jesus said, in answer to the question Nicodemus asked (John 3:5), we must be born of the water and the Spirit if we want to enter the kingdom. Being born of the Spirit means that God's Spirit must live within you. The Scriptures say that our bodies are the temple of the Spirit. The Spirit will only live in a clean temple. You must keep your temple clean and holy if you want the Spirit to live within you.

"It is written that during the ordinance of being born of the Spirit, you will receive "fire and the Holy Ghost". We don't hear very much about the fire. Some people say it is the same thing as the Holy Ghost. I don't believe it is the same or God wouldn't have called it two different things. The purpose of the fire is to: 1) protect you--like the pillar of fire protected the children of Israel and 2) to burn the chaff out of your life. In other words, all of the things that God doesn't want in your life is burnt up by the fire. You are cleansed and purified by the fire.

"In this ordinance, God's Spirit is given as a confirming power of the covenant you made in baptism. That is why we sometimes refer to this ordinance as the "Confirmation". There are three things that happen as the Elders lay their hands on you:

1. They, through the power of God, seal the covenant you made in baptism to accept Christ as your Savior and to follow His teachings.

2. We, you and each of us, are bound together as the body of Christ. We are to accept you as a full-fledged member of the body. You are now our brother in Christ.

3. It is the way God chose to give you the Holy Ghost and fire as He promised to do throughout the Scriptures.

"I can't tell you what you will experience today. I hope you have a powerful experience with God's Spirit. I am talking about a greater measure of God's Spirit then you had before today. Everybody has

a certain amount of the Spirit of God. Each of us was born with a measure of God's Spirit. But, the Spirit that is given today is stronger and makes it possible for you to:

1) Be a son of God, even as Adam was. (See John 1:12; Romans 8:14) and,

2) You will have available to you an ever increasing amount of the Spirit of God (See DC 90:4). It is up to you. You will either gain more and more of God's Spirit or you will lose the Spirit. He will not stay in you if you reject Him or pollute His temple. In one way today, you are the same person. In another way, since you have been baptized, you are now a different person. With the Holy Ghost being given to you today, you will have the ability to do things and to see things you could not do for yourself.

"Aquila, don't ever let what anyone may do or say separate you from the Spirit of Christ. Don't let your pastor, your church school teacher, other Saints, or anyone else separate you from the Spirit of Christ. Governments can't separate you from this Spirit. Troubles in life can't do it. Famine, disease, and all the bad things of the world can't do it. Only you can make God's Spirit to leave. He will leave you only if you pollute your temple so He can't live within you. I pray that you will always choose to have His Spirit live in you. That you will keep your temple clean and obey His commandments so that His Spirit can live in you always."

Aquila's mother, Yvonne, and his sister, Cessaries, accompanied by Aquila on his guitar, sang, "Glorify Thy Name In All the Earth". Elders Michael Jordison and Steven Smith, with Michael as spokesman, conferred the Holy Spirit upon Aquila. Brother Rolfe asked for prayers for the new member of Christ's Church, and 4 persons responded with beautiful petitions on his behalf and on behalf of the congregation in it's role as the family of Christ of which Aquila had chosen to become a member. Sue Beck sang of our need to worship God even "as the deer panteth after water", and Elder Steven Smith gave the ministry of preaching.

The Holy Spirit: a Tool, Not a Trophy*

Brother Smith announced first that it was his intention to use five scriptures. When we heard the fifth, we would know that the sermon was near its end. The first one is found in 2 Nephi 13:24-28.

"For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water: and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire, and by the Holy Ghost. And then are ye in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; And ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye enter in by the way, ye should receive.

"And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask, if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far, save it were by the word of Christ, with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save;"

Our speaker then announced that he had grass growing under his trees, one hundred and thirty seven of them, that he needed to somehow get trimmed -- without using his teeth, he added facetiously; and he asked his audience to tell him how he should do it. He noted that cows could do it, but they made a mess. Someone said, "Mow it.", but it had already been mowed. This grass was too close to the trees to be mowed with a mower. There was response from adults and children alike as it was determined first that he needed a weed eater. "How do I get a weed eater?" he asked. \$109 from Sears store was the response. Immediately he declared, "Now I

have purchased a weed eater from Sears for \$109. I ask, is all done?" The appropriate response was, "Nay! You have to use the weed eater!"

Brother Smith read again portions the scripture from 2 Nephi declaring that having entered in to the strait and narrow way by repentance and baptism, we have remission of our sins through the Holy Spirit, but again asked, "Is all done?" The answer was again, "Nay!". He explained that the strait in this instance was spelled s-t-r-a-i-t, meaning narrow as the Strait of Magellan, bound by steep cliffs or by some other phenomenon that would require one to remain in it to get where they desired to go. He commented that some of our friends feel that having received the Spirit, that is all they need to do for salvation. Here he emphasized that the Spirit is a tool, not a trophy, declaring that if it is left hanging on the wall, it will disappear.

There was interactive dialogue as it was determined that once you had the tool, it was necessary to get gasoline, not just any kind of gas, to mix the gasoline with oil, take off the tank cap, fill the tank with the gasoline-oil mixture, return the cap to its place. "Am I finished now?" the speaker asked. We were delighted to hear the clear voice of a kindergartner near the middle of the church speak up saying, "Nay! You have to turn it on!" There ensued a conversation between the speaker and the child as they discussed how the job should be done. Eventually it was determined that one had to turn on the switch, prime the bubble, pull out the choke, pull the proper cord, the one with the handle, often multiple times to get the weed eater running, engage the cutting cord, and trim the grass around the tree.

"I've done that," the speaker announced. "Now, is all done?" "Nay!" came from the audience. "There are one hundred thirty six more trees!" (After the service a young elder who had recently passed his examinations to become a Certified Public Accountant informed our speaker, "At 5 minutes per tree, that's 11 hours and twenty minutes of work!" obviously applying the analogy to his ministry using the tools of his new profession.)

"That sounds like a lot of commandments!" Our speaker commented. "Do I have to do them all? Couldn't I get the grass trimmed if I did just part of what you have told me to do -- maybe 70 percent?" The answer was obvious and there was a vigorous shaking of heads throughout the room

For the work to be done satisfactorily, it had to be done in a competent manner. Steven told of his having tried to help his father-in-law trim the grass along his sidewalk. His father-in-law could do it so it looked as if the green grass naturally grew just to the sidewalk. Steven allowed the trimmer to make a wavy line that touched the soil and burned some of the grass along the way making an unsightly brown and green pattern along the walk. His father-in-law no longer allows him to use his weed eater! "It takes practice to use a weed eater to cut the grass and not to sear the soil." Steven declared, "just as it takes practice to use the Holy Spirit in the way God intended."

This process, Brother Smith likened to the presence of the Holy Spirit in Aquila's life and in ours. "You can hold up the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life as a trophy or you can use it," he declared. And if you use it, there are certain commandments, like the steps in getting the weed eater operating and getting the grass trimmed around, not just one, but one hundred and thirty seven trees.

The Fruit the Spirit Bears

Elder Smith's second scripture describes some of the fruit of

the Spirit that results and must be evident if the Spirit is to do its work. Galatians 5:22-23 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law." Steven briefly spoke of these characteristics that identify one using the Holy Spirit, not letting it hang as a trophy on the record of our lives. To be without one, he said, is like having a weed eater without a motor.

And when the Holy Spirit is in use in our lives, there are many ways in which that Spirit is manifest. Many of these Paul listed in his first Corinthian letter, 1 Cor. 12:4-11. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

It was at this point that Elder Smith reminded us that there is need for us to continually remember that grass will grow again under our trees and the job will have to be done over and over again. He noted that we often fail to accomplish all that we had determined to do with the Spirit that has been bestowed upon us. Sometimes we hit our "weed eater" with a hammer or throw it in front of a truck and allow it to be damaged and we need to get it repaired or to get it replaced. We sin and need to repent. For that reason, the Lord has instituted the Lord's Supper to keep us remembering our covenant with Him, to renew that right Spirit within us. For that purpose we are met this day, to reaffirm our covenant and our willingness to live in that Holy Spirit.

We Reaffirm Our Willingness to Live In The Holy Spirit

Doctrine and Covenants 17:22d was scripture number four for the day.

"O God, the eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it, that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God, the eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given them, that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. Amen."

Scripture number 5 was Mark 10:15-18: "And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? None is good but one, that is God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery; Do not kill; Do not steal; Do not bear false witness; Defraud not; Honor thy father and mother. And the man answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth." This young man had done all these things since his youth. He was evidently a righteous young man, yet there was more. He was just ready for the real work his Master had for him, and he turned away from it saddened.

We were challenged to learn to use the tool Jesus had placed in our lives, that gift of the Holy Spirit bestowed on all those who repent and are baptized in His name by water and by the laying on of His Priesthood's hands. "Go," Steven paraphrased the scripture that has been so recently brought to our minds by the musical at the

Reunion, "For behold, the field is white already to harvest, and lo, he that thrusteth in his weed eater (sickle), with his might bringeth salvation to his soul."

Called To Be A Witness

Elder Norman Nelson introduced his sermon reading: "From the fourth book of Nephi (1:17-19): 'And it came to pass that there was no contention in all the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people. And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness. And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God: ...'"

Rob Rolfe sang the last 15 verses of the seventh chapter of Luke, the story the woman who anointed Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair, as told by Simon, the host of the day. Each verse declared Christ's view of the matter, "The depths of God's forgiveness is deeper than the sea, and no matter how you think of her, she's beautiful to me." (Elder Nelson later referred to the song in his sermon.)

"This is an awesome thing to try to do today - to try to tell all of you what needs to happen. As I have studied and looked into the things that we need to know, I think I will start out with a parable. Some of you who have been here have heard this before. It's like this. We are going to study French. And so we go to the French class the first day of class and meet the teacher. He gives us a bunch of books and says we are supposed to study these during this term, and he says, 'I'll be in my office. You can come and talk to me any time. I would like to talk to you about it and help you learn.'

"But there is a cheaper version of the book that synthesizes everything in the book. So we don't bother with the books he gives us. We really don't have time, or want to take time, to go talk to the teacher and learn what he wants us to know. Comes the last day of class. We have never gone to class, but when we look at the final exam, it's French! But what do we want? We all want the A, don't we, for that beautiful class we signed up for and didn't take?"

"That's exactly like what we are. We signed up to be Christians, but we never look at His books, or very seldom. We never go to Him in prayer and ask for His help, or at least very seldom, and we want to enter Celestial Glory. If we did, we would be most miserable -- a lot more miserable than we are if we are sent to hell. It's time we wake up, begin reading His books, begin going to Him in prayer, and doing exactly like the Patriarchs have asked us to do. Study - they said a minimum of two hours a week. You better put it to ten! They have asked us to pray, not a thirty second prayer, but real prayer in which you begin to ask God to forgive you, to help you become the people He wants us to be. The promise is that if we do that, we can have eternal life, the Kingdom of God. We can be His sons and daughters. How in the world can you ever enjoy being with God who created everything, the sun and the moon, the stars, all of creation, all of humanity, if you don't know Him - if you haven't studied Him - if you haven't talked with Him - if you haven't tried to be His people?"

God Has A Plan

"God has a plan. He started out with a plan, didn't he? And I think you all know His plan. In the first place He created you and me and every other soul on the face of the universe, and He asks us to love each other and take care of each other, if we want to be with Him, because that's what He does. Remember He said, 'This is My

work and My glory to bring to pass the eternal life of man.'

"Now there are several here who have been called to special duties in His kingdom, several who will be called if you qualify and do the things that we are talking about now - if you study and pray and try to be His children. None are excused from this duty. If you think because you go someplace else and do something else, God will forgive you and forget that you made a promise. God will never forget the promise that you have made to Him. You may forget, but He will never forget any time you have made a promise to be part of His Kingdom. Don't ever think He will ever forget. You are going to be judged, and I am going to be judged, out of these books. We had better know what they say! And you are not excused for not reading them. You are not excused from not asking Him to show you what's in them. You either do it or you are out among the wicked. And only those who have not had the chance to know these things are excused. You have all had a chance. You have the opportunity. It is here before you. Use it or lose it!

"Not only will this happen, but if you don't study and pray and prepare yourself, you will forget everything you ever knew pertaining to His kingdom. If you don't continue to learn, you will forget everything you ever knew. When I was young, I took piano lessons and I played fairly well, but now all I can do is one finger at a time; because I haven't used it. The same is true of the scripture and every thing pertaining to God's kingdom. If you don't use it, you lose it. It's gone, and you are unable to remember what you need to know to be his children.

"In the beginning God created you and me and every other soul in the universe. Our scriptures only tell us about this earth, but He says there are many worlds and many earths and many other souls beside those here. In Genesis we read about Adam and Eve and He talks about man, and man is plural. Male and female created I them, man! All of those people who are trying to say God is some sort of a female or something else, it ain't so! God is our father. He is God. He is not something else. They can't make something else out of Him. He is the great I AM, and Jesus Christ is His Son, and through Jesus Christ God created all of this world and everything here. And if we try to make Jesus Christ into something else, we are along with Satan.

Satan Has A Plan

"And I, the Lord God, spake unto Moses, saying, That Satan whom thou hast commanded in the name of mine Only Begotten, is the same which was from the beginning; And he came before me, saying, Behold I, send me, I will be thy Son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore, give me thine honor. But behold, my beloved Son, which was my beloved and chosen from the beginning, said unto me: Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever.

"Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him; and also that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten I caused that he should be cast down; and he became Satan. Yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive, and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice.

"How can you hearken to the voice of God if you don't ever listen or try to understand Him. So you see, right from the beginning, if you are not actively engaged in doing God's will - in studying and praying and doing the things He wants you to do, you are subject to the carnal, sensual and devilish things that Satan puts before us. You are subject to anger. You are subject to sensuality. You are subject

to all kinds of evil if you don't actively practice the things that lead you to the kingdom of God.

God's Plan Revealed by Angels

"Adam learned about God's plan when angels were sent to him to minister to him. He was told (Genesis 6:51-71), "But God hath made known unto our fathers, that all men must repent. And he called upon our father Adam, by his own voice, saying, I am God; I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh. And he also said unto him, If thou wilt, turn unto me and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask it shall be given you. ... For, by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified; and by the blood ye are sanctified.

"And, behold, all things have their likeness; and all things are created and made to bear record of me; both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath, all things bear record of me. ...

"And the Spirit of God descended upon him, and thus he was born of the Spirit, and became quickened in the inner man. And he heard a voice out of heaven, saying, Thou art baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost; this is the record of the Father and the Son, from henceforth and forever; And thou art after the order of him who was without beginning of days or end of years, from all eternity to all eternity. Behold, thou art one in me, a son of God; and thus may all become my sons." That's God's plan for you. Come to Me. Be baptized. Keep My commandments.

"This is from Deuteronomy 10:12-16: "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked."

Your Calling

"That wasn't just given to Israel back there. That is given to you today. You are here where you are in this church because you are a chosen people. What are you chosen for? What was Israel chosen for? What did they think they were chosen for? 'We are the holy ones of Israel! We can't do anything wrong!' Wrong! You are chosen to spread the word that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God! Unless you have that testimony, you can't give it away. You can't spread it. You must find that testimony that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Unless you have it, you can't give it, and that's what you are called to do. That is your calling. If you are chosen, He has placed you here as very special witnesses for Him. You are a very special people with a very special calling - not to say how wonderful we are, because we are not; but to spread the word that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God - that He loves you, that He came and lived and died for you, and in the Garden of Gethsemane ---. Let me go back a little bit.

"When I was in Nigeria, I had an experience. I was talking to

a group of so-called patriarchs, and one of them asked me, 'Why did Jesus sin in the Garden of Gethsemane?' I didn't know, and I said, 'Well, He didn't. Then God's Spirit came and said, 'You think I was afraid to die on the cross, and you are wrong! The reason I sweat great drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane was because I knew the pain it would cause me to have to be separated from My Father in order to take on Me your sins if you repent.' "I knew the pain it would cause me to have to be separated from My Father to take upon me, your sins if you repent', our speaker repeated. "And that's what He came into the world to do - to live and to die. The cross was not the pain. It was the separation from God. Our consciences are sealed with a hot iron. We don't realize the pain of being separated from our Father, and it's time we began to learn what that pain really is - how serious it is to be separated from Him - not to be His children - not to be really spending our entire lives living for Him to be with Him for eternity.

"He's the creator. He can't stand sin at all. Christ is our advocate with the Father. He will take upon Him our sins if we repent - if we do the things he has asked - if we keep His commandments. He will do that for us. That's how great His love is for us. But you have to do your part. You see, He said, 'I will save all who will.' The people who reject Him, He can't do anything about. He can take upon Him the sins of those who come and repent and keep His commandments. They're the only ones He can save.

"You see, Satan said, 'I'll save everybody! Nobody will be lost!' How can you make a friend - How can you be a friend if you are made to do it - If somebody says, 'You either be good to this man or I will kill you.' Well, that's not what God wants. He says, 'I want all those who will keep my commandments - who will learn, who will decide they want to love Me and want to be with Me. If you don't do that, you are not His kingdom - you are not His people. You have to want to, and do your best to become, His sons and daughters if you are going to be in His Kingdom.

From Psalms 24:1-6: 'The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob.'

A Second Testimony

"I am going to tell you another story that happened to me in Nigeria. One night a group of us were there and we were not being able to do what we wanted to do. We were just sort of being kept as: 'Look. We have these rich Americans with us and we want to show them off.' We were not really being able to minister. So the six of us had a prayer service. After that service that night, I had a dream. In the dream, I was walking down a wide road and I came to a fountain of water. There I met my Lord, and He said, 'Come and drink freely.' (There is no mistaking the Lord when you see Him. There is a feeling of peace and serenity. Words are unable to express the feeling you have.) I was amazed because He didn't have on a white robe, until He showed me. That awful stained robe that He was wearing was mine!

"You see, He will do that for you if you ask - if you repent - if you try to do His will. He will take your robe - that woman that Rob sang about - He will forgive your sins. He will make you clean. And those things that aren't good for His kingdom, He will take away

and make it possible for you to become a son like Him to be present with the Father and be able to enjoy His presence. If we keep our dirty stained robes on us, we can't possibly enjoy being with God in our filthy condition. We have to be better than that!

"You have to have an experience something like Joseph and Sidney did. In Section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants verses 2-3h: '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; ... for by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will; yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man.

"We, Joseph Smith, Jr., and Sidney Rigdon, being in the Spirit on the sixteenth of February, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty-two, by the power of the Spirit our eyes were opened, and our understandings were enlightened, so as to see and understand the things of God; .. and we beheld the glory of the Son, on the right hand of the Father, and received of his fullness; and saw the holy angels, and they who are sanctified before his throne, worshipping God and the Lamb, who worship him for ever and ever.

"And, now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him, that he lives; for we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father; that by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created; and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God.' You can and must have that experience. Otherwise you cannot testify. You cannot bear record of those things He wants you to bear record of and to know.

"Well, we have talked about a lot of things. What happened today? Christ says, 'My part is to redeem you and bring salvation to you if you will. He says, 'Your part is to follow Me and to keep My commandments, to preach the Kingdom of God and repentance to all people. When are we going to start? Next week? Next year? Or are you going to start now? If you don't start now, you will never start. This is our day. This is our day of probation. Either we get busy and do the work, or our probation is over and we are out. That's your choice.

Slaves By Choice

Moroni 7:9-14 was read by Elder Michael Jordison as he began his message July 18, 2004. "For behold, a bitter fountain can not bring forth good water; neither can a good fountain bring forth bitter water; wherefore a man being a servant of the devil, can not follow Christ; and if he follow Christ, he can not be a servant of the devil. Wherefore, all things which are good, cometh of God; and that which is evil, cometh of the devil; for the devil is an enemy unto God, and fighteth against him continually, and inviteth and enticeth to sin, and to do that which is evil continually. But behold, that which is of God, inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, everything which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God.

"Wherefore take heed, my beloved brethren, that ye do not judge that which is evil to be of God, or that which is good and of God, to be of the devil. For behold, my brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night. For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that they may know good from evil; wherefore I shew

unto you the way to judge: for everything which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ;”

“A man being a servant of the devil cannot follow Christ,” Brother Jordison declared. “And if he follow Christ, he cannot be a servant of the devil. This is something that has been on my mind lately. I’d like to start off this morning sharing about a man who live a long time ago named John Newton. Most all of you are familiar with the hymn, Amazing Grace, and that is just one of hundreds of hymns that John Newton wrote.

“John was born in London, England in 1725. His mother was a devout Christian and she raised John to be a minister. She taught him scriptures from the Bible and Latin, a language he would need to know in order to enter into the ministry at that time. But John’s father was a seaman, and his early life was torn between these two professions: a minister of Christ or a man of the sea. When only eleven years old, John went to sea with his father, and as you might guess, the sea won out.

“John spent his early years sailing the ocean and when yet a teenager, he was taken captive by a ruthless captain to Sierra Leone. There he was made a slave and worked along side other slaves from parts of Africa. For over a year he lived the life of a slave, when a kinder man of the sea saw and freed him from his shackles. And thus he regained his liberty as a free man again. Because of his captivity, he knew the experiences of slave. Now you would think that he would have shied away from that whole business, but he didn’t. In fact, John, eager to return to the life he knew at sea, signed aboard a new ship and joined into the growing and vibrant slave trade; although he was regarded as a ‘kinder and gentler’ slave trader. He chose to refer to his captives as ‘men’ and ‘women’ instead of ‘cargo’, the unfeeling term used by other traders.

“The life of a slave wasn’t what you would call exciting. Men would scour the villages off the Western coast of Africa cheaply buying slaves from the various warring tribes, or taking villagers captive themselves. They would gather men, women and children near the shore and wait until one of the slave ships sailed by, then sell them for the highest price they could obtain. The slave traders then hauled them to their ships and placed them in the hold below the main deck.

“Now the hold in many of the ships at that time was approximately 5 feet high; so the slaves (many who were quite tall) had only 5 feet in which to stand and move for the approximate eight weeks that it took to sail across the Atlantic. Some of the slave traders, called ‘tight-packers’, were not as ‘kind’ to their ‘cargo’. They would place a platform midway up in the hold so that they could fit almost twice the number of slaves. Many slaves died from various elements on the voyage, so the traders wanted to make sure they got to their destination with a profitable number of the living to make up for the losses.

“Can you imagine being stuck in a space only 2 _ feet high for eight weeks” Brother Jordison asked. “The only time they would be allowed above the deck was to occasionally get some fresh air or if one of the slaves died.

“In the beginning of the slave trade, while the prisoners were boarding the ship or sailing, many of them jumped overboard, choosing to perish in the water rather than live in bondage. So the captains took chains and bound their wrists and ankles, and then chained them to the next captive. So when one died, the rest would have to sit next to the decaying body until the whole group was taken above deck while the hold was flushed of the disease and filth.

It wasn’t a very exciting time as you can imagine. Often times, because women were taken as well, there would be babies born on the voyage. Can you women imagine trying to have a baby while chained in a space only 2 _ feet high? I don’t believe that would be very comfortable. In fact, it would be downright awful. Some of the captains chose to keep the babies, thinking of another ‘piece of cargo’ to sell in the Americas. But often times the babies were merely thrown overboard to drown in the depths of the ocean.

“After eight weeks of strenuous conditions on both the crew and captives, they arrived in the Americas. The slaves were sold to the highest bidders. Native goods were then loaded on the ships, which sailed for European ports to sell for yet more profit. Then the ships would set sail once again South along the coast of Africa where yet another fresh supply of captive Africans awaited them, and they journey was repeated. That was the life that John Newton experienced, I won’t say enjoyed, because it wasn’t really a joy. And I find it kind of strange that after knowing what it was like to live as a slave, John Newton took to the profession of selling live flesh, even though the slave trade was not uncommon for most ‘civilized’ folk of the day.

“When he was about 23 years old, the ship that John was on, just off the coast of Newfoundland, I believe, found itself in a terrible storm. The waves came crashing in, knocking supplies and provisions into the violent sea. Every man fought all night long to keep the boat from capsizing. While he was engaged in this storm, the words of his mother and the scriptures he had learned as a child came back to him. He thought, ‘If the Christian religion was true, how could God ever love and save me? How could God ever take me back?’ knowing his life had not measured up to the faith he had been taught. That was the turning point in his life, he later wrote, yet he continued in the slave trade another six years. He always thought back to that time, when he was delivered from death, and he prayed that God would deliver him to a better, ‘a more humane profession’.

“Six years from that time, John Newton became ill and decided to call it quits. A captain of his own ship at that time, he sold it and took to working in the harbor. On the very next voyage, his former ship was capsized in a storm; washing the entire crew overboard to their deaths. And thus the Lord spared John Newton, through an illness that caused him to quit that inhumane profession.

“Well for the next few years, there was some pretty heavy preaching going on by the likes of George Whitefield and John Wesley. Newton took courage at the words they were preaching and felt that he was called into the ministry. So after a few years, he became a minister, a poet and a composer of hymns, the part which most of you are familiar with. He died in 1807, and wrote his own epitaph. It reads thus,

‘John Newton, Clerk.
Once an infidel and libertine,
A servant of slaves in Africa,
Was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ
Preserved, restored, pardoned,
And appointed to preach the faith he
Had long laboured to destroy...’

“While he lived, he had painted in wood above the mantle of his fireplace, ‘And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee.’ (Deuteronomy 15:15) He was raised to be a Christian, chose the life

of an infidel, became a slave, became the master of slaves, and finally became a minister of the Gospel.

Bought with a Price

“Has anybody here had a life like that? Has anybody here ever been a slave? Is any of you a slave right now? Every single one of us should have our hand up. We have all been slaves, and we are all still slaves.”

Brother Jordison began to quote the introductions to some of the letters the early Apostles wrote as recorded in the Bible. “‘James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ’. Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ’. Jude, the servant of God, called of Jesus Christ’. The revelation of John, a servant of God, which was given unto him of Jesus Christ’. Paul and Sylvanus and Timotheus, servants of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ’. Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ’. This is how these men chose to begin their letters, and now I want you to compare that to Paul’s greeting to Philemon and his brethren in the church. He says to Philemon, ‘Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ’. In this instance, instead of the usual calling as a servant of Jesus Christ, Paul likens himself to a prisoner of Jesus Christ. Have you ever thought about that? Does that make sense to you? In fact in Ephesians, Paul goes on to say that he is ‘an ambassador in bonds’ (Ephesians 6:20). Often we think of ‘bonds’ as some kind of kinship or something of that nature. But if you look this up, in Greek the word is ‘halysis’. The word that Paul chose to use means ‘chained, a state of imprisonment’. In fact as he goes on, if you read most of his letters, most of his references to being a bondsman of Jesus Christ refer to being imprisoned or shackled or chained to something.

Did Paul really mean that being in the service of Jesus Christ is like being a prisoner? That’s not what I thought. Jesus came to set the prisoners free. That was included in what we discussed in class last week when we talked about Jesus’ reading in the temple. ‘The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath sent me to bind the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound...’ (Isaiah 61:1). That sounds to me like Jesus came to set us free – not to make us prisoners. That’s what I thought; so Paul must be wrong here. He ways in his letter to the Saints at Corinth, ‘For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman...’ “Set us free”, Michael interjected, then continued, ‘...likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ’s servant. Ye are bought with a price; be ye not the servants of men.’ (1 Cor. 7:22-23).

“What did he mean when he referred to us as servants? If you look that us as well, you’ll find that the Greek for servant here is *doubleos*. It’s meaning: ‘a slave, owned as a possession by a free man, one who is of lower social status than a free man.’ Jesus, of course is the slave buyer who purchased the slaves from the slaveholder, Satan. The price that He paid was His life, and His scars are the receipt of purchase that He carries with Him forever.

Which Master Do You Choose?

“In Matthew 6:24, Jesus taught His disciples that you cannot serve two masters, for he will either ‘hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon’, or God and the world – God and Satan. I think that Jesus was telling His disciples, and us today, that there are only two master in this world. There is Jesus and there is Satan, and we cannot serve them both at the same time. When we were under the bondage of sin, we served Satan. Now that we are made

free through the blood of Christ, we swerve Jesus. As Paul said to the Galatian Saints (Gal. 1:20), ‘For do I now please men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ’.

“A little over 4 years ago now, we attended the first Family Missionary Reunion. Julia and I both had a really good experience at that reunion (having Patriarchal Blessings given to us among other things). But I was talking with Julia a few weeks ago and I asked, ‘since that first reunion has anything in our lives really changed? Are we greatly different than we were four years ago? Are we personally any closer to Zion? Are we closer to keeping God’s commandments – doing His will? Are we any freer from Babylon – what we call Babylon (the world) – freer from wickedness?’ Her answer and mine were both ‘No’. We aren’t different in the way that we need to be. Circumstances have changed, and priorities have changed somewhat. We have had some good experiences with the Lord, and have a greater zeal for the Gospel. But good experiences don’t necessarily make us change in the way that I’m talking about. Real intimacy with the Lord Jesus Christ begins with obedience on a whole greater level than we (and perhaps many others) are aspiring to. There has to be something after a great experience that makes the change. Why weren’t we changing?

I thought about that, and I came up with a couple of questions to ask myself. The first, ‘Who am I serving?’ And the second, ‘How am I serving?’ Jesus Was made to be our Lord and Master. I shouldn’t say that He was made to be; He is our Lord and Master. He doesn’t just want to be, He is. There is no choice about it. We can either choose to treat His as Lord and Master, or we can choose to treat Satan as our Lord and Master. A master is someone who has power and authority over a slave. I don’t know about you, but I find the idea repulsive to be a slave or a prisoner. In fact, I wore my patriotic tie today (American flags) to remind me of the liberty that was given to us with the birth of this nation – because we were brought up to be free from the rule of tyrants and those who would exercise power and authority over us – to be free men. (The Book of Mormon talks about the freemen as well.) It’s hard for me to consider that being completely submissive to anything can be a good thing. But still, after everything my head tells me, I think that Paul had it right, that we are prisoners of Jesus Christ. We were born free men, just like the men and women of Africa a few years ago. Satan, the slave trader came and captured us, and brought us across the sea of distress and anguish. And Jesus was at the other side where He bought each one of us. With our purchase we were made free from the evil slave trader. We weren’t set free. We were made free from Satan’s bondage, and we were to become slaves to do Christ’s will.

“Well, just because we have been bought by Jesus Christ doesn’t mean that we have to stay with Him. We can choose to go back to our old master and serve Satan. It’s not a free ticket, that we’ll never have to think about who we’ll serve again. It’s something that we have to choose to do. But when we run away from Jesus, unlike from the ruthless slave holders, we don’t have to worry about being beat, starved or even killed sometimes. Jesus chooses instead to let the rewards of serving our old master be our punishment. When we serve Satan we reap his reward. That’s punishment enough!

Our Disposition to Do Evil Broken By Love

“How does a slave learn submission? A slave that is bound by violence and fear is beaten. He or she is scared – afraid to do

anything contrary to what her master decrees. And after they have been brought down so low for such a long time, they learn submission because they have no self respect, and often no realization of self worth – having no liberty. They are humbled because their will has been broken. We have been beaten low by the devil, and we were made aware of our humble obedience to him through our first confession of faith... ‘I know that I’m a sinner’. And I believe that Jesus Christ wants the same thing for us, with a different twist. We have been bought by Jesus, and when we were baptized in water, fire and the Holy Ghost, a new chain was placed around us, one that we willingly chose to put on. And we were sealed his – bound to serve Him, with His proof of ownership on his hands and feet. We decided this. That was the ‘physical’ submission to Him, but there is another part of it that now comes up – the breaking of our will – our disposition to do evil – to sin. That’s what has to be broken in the heart of every believer. That’s what needs to happen to make the change that I need in my life. I can have all the wonderful experiences in the world, but until my disposition to do wrong is broken, I cannot truly gain the prize.

“Somebody recently asked me, ‘How do I change? You’re telling what I need to change, but, really what do I need to be doing so that I can change? Just give me the steps. Give me a formula.’ There is no magic formula! There is no specifically magical pattern that can do anything for us. The answer I believe is really very simple. The Lord is our Benevolent slave holder. We can either choose to serve Him or we can choose to serve ourselves, which in reality is serving the devil. Solomon wrote, ‘Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; Fear God and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.’ (Ecclesiastes 12:13) We read that over and over again in the scriptures, ‘keep the commandments’. ‘Do My will.’ ‘Do what I say.’ ‘When you do what I say, I am bound. When you do not what I say, you have no promise.’ It’s very simple, basically it’s only a matter of choice.

“Yesterday morning I got up fairly early, called Sherman and said, ‘Want to go out for breakfast and a motorcycle ride?’ Now I’ve been having trouble sleeping at night, which makes it hard for me to get up in the morning. You know though, it’s interesting that when it’s something I want to do, I don’t have any trouble getting up in the morning and doing it.

“What is it in your life that you choose to do? Are there compromising movies that you want to see – to serve yourself? Are there certain designer clothes that you just have to wear – to serve your desires? Are there books you’re reading that do you no good at all? How about magazines or television shows? Perhaps it’s hunting. I used to love getting up at 4:30 to go hunting. Wouldn’t it be great if I had the same desire to get up and study my scriptures at 4:30 every morning? Perhaps it’s sports. Are sports the main focus in your life? The list can go on and on, and is unique to every individual. Many of things do not necessarily pull us down individually, but many of them have become distracting priorities in our lives that do not reflect the idea that Jesus is the Master of our lives – directing all of our activities. The real question to ask ourselves is, ‘Are we serving God, or ourselves?’ This is something that can, and I think should be, asked at every moment of decision in our lives. There is no and. There is only or. We cannot serve God and ourselves.

“That is unless, ourselves have been given completely up and Christ is living in our place (Gal. 2:20). You know, true obedience to a master must be born out of love. Have you considered that? Do you love Jesus as your Master? Do you love doing His will? Do we

love it? Do we love serving Him more than we love serving ourselves? Those seven or eight apostles who began their letters as I quoted, what was different about their lives? How were they able to live such devoted lives – until their sometimes horrific deaths? Do we want to have lives like theirs? Do we desire the same experiences that they had – not just the men, but the women as well? To me the matter is simple. We have to choose to serve God, instead of ourselves. We must become servants- slaves to our Master.

“I was caught by our call to worship this morning (Alma 16:171-173). Last week we had some LDS missionaries come to our house. One of the questions asked me was, ‘Why are we here?’ So I said real quickly, ‘Adam fell that men might be, and men are that they might have joy’. That’s why we’re here – to have joy – to know joy. And so in our call to worship this morning it talks about this fruit. Nephi goes on to say that this fruit is ‘the most joyous to the soul.’ So it stands to reason that if we are to have joy, then shouldn’t we get some of this fruit?

“So I want you to close your eyes. I want you to look out in your mind and see that tree. See it shining in all its glory and splendor afar off. But if you’ll look down, you’ll see a path at your feet. This path is straight and it’s narrow and it leads directly to the tree. Now in your mind, I want you to imagine closing your eyes, and with your eyes closed walk towards that tree. You’re very unsure, very unsteady. In fact, if you have one leg longer than the other you’re eventually going to start to veer off the path because you can’t see the tree or the path.

“Now keeping your eyes closed, in your mind open them. Look down and you’ll see the path again. Now off to your left there is this rod. I want you to reach over with your left hand and grab that rod. You can feel the coolness of it, the solidness of it. It doesn’t move at all. Now close your eyes in your mind again.. I want you to start walking towards that tree again – holding onto that rod. You’re walking, walking, jogging, running, running...

“Open your eyes. Did you realize that when you held that rod in your hand that you were bonded to it like a chain? And how easily and quickly you could get to the tree as long as you were holding – bound to that rod. And this is the calling that each one of us has as Saints, to choose to do right, to bind ourselves – to become a prisoner of Jesus Christ, willing subjecting ourselves to do His will only. A slave does only what his master says. Only be thankful that your Master doesn’t beat you when you step out of line.

The Restoration of the Gospel and Apostasy

Elder Gerald Bolingbroke brought us the message on Sunday, July 25. His sermon gave us insight into the causes of apostasy, and it gave us hope for a time when there are those around us who no longer believe in the power that comes only from the word of God. Brother Bolingbroke began by reading from the Holy Scriptures: II Timothy 4:1-4 and from the Doctrine and Covenants Sec. 32:3.

Gerald and his wife recently visited his family in Idaho, where he shared some gospel news with his three brothers. He remarked that Idaho has been experienced unusual weather this year. It was cool in the evenings, as usual, but it was also rainy, making the terrain more green than normal. As Gerald began his message, he informed the congregation that he would be talking about the Restoration gospel and apostasy.

“It is not pleasant to consider that there is an apostasy, but it is better to face facts than to ignore them. At the time of the Apostles, they were concerned about apostasy creeping into their religious practices. In any age there is a chance of apostasy. Our Heavenly Father continues to want people to respond to him and take full advantage of the opportunities of the Gospel. But because of sin, which the people obeyed, they went into apostasy. The Apostles knew that apostasy was coming, and foretold it. Every one of them had three facts in mind. The present fact of the truth committed to them, the coming of the apostasy, and the final fact of the triumphant return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter, John, and Paul each bore witness of these facts.

“Peter and John were on their way to the temple not long after the day of Pentecost. They came on a maimed man sitting beside the Gate Bountiful, asking for alms. The lame man had never walked, and there was no power within him by which he could learn to walk. Friends had done all they could for him, but he had lost hope. All that he asked was help in carrying on his meager existence. But, when Peter and John saw him, the love of Jesus was manifest in power when Peter said, ‘Silver and gold have I none, but in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.’ The people around them were amazed when he got up and walked. Peter used the occasion to tell them of the true story of the crucifixion. They needed to repent and be converted, to expect great things from God. Then Peter reached beyond the present told them of a future time when there would be a restitution of all things. Acts 3:19-26 tells us, ‘Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the time of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord: And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom ye have crucified; Whom the heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy Seed shall all of the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.’

“After this the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came to them. They were grieved that they taught the people and told them of the resurrection of Jesus. It was now evening and about five thousand men had believed the apostles. The priests and those that were with them put their hands upon the apostles and held them until the next day. Then Annas, the high priest, and John, Alexander, and their friends were gathered together in Jerusalem. They set Peter and John in their midst and asked them by what power they had done this. Peter answered, filled with the holy Ghost, and told them about Jesus Christ. They were amazed at the boldness of Peter and John. The priests knew that the apostles were unlearned and ignorant men that had been with Jesus. The man that was healed was standing before them so the priests could not say anything against the apostles. Peter and John prayed, and the people were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

“We know that there was a change in Peter and John for now they were speaking with boldness. It was a great experience for Peter to feel the Spirit of God surging through him.

“Peter and Paul both knew of the successive apostasies of the past. And both of them knew of the Apostasy which was to follow their ministry.

“The Apostle John outlived Peter and Paul and all the other apostles. Before the end of his life, the beginnings of apostasy were clearly apparent. He was required to write to the seven churches of Asia, chiding them for the loss of their first love, and he told them that they were luke warm. He was shown by God what was to take place in the future. He said in Rev 14:6,7, ‘And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the Earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water.’

“We know of the restoration of the Gospel in these latter days by the Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. We also know of an apostasy in our day in our Church. We also know among other churches that many are believing in the wrong things. One thing they are believing wrong is evolution which makes them not believe in Genesis.

“I recently got a book by Fazali Rana and Hugh Ross entitled Origins of Life. In this book the authors tell of the conversion of Rana, a Moslem. His father was a Moslem but not a strict adherent to Islam. He read the Qur’an every day and carried a prayer book with him wherever he went, and his Mother was a non-practicing Catholic. They agreed to not discuss religion.

“They provided for a sound ethical upbringing for his brother and him, but they agreed to disagree on religious matters. As a young person, he never disbelieved in God, he just never considered God in anything he did. His parents considered any grade lower than an A a failure. His father was a nuclear Physicist, and worked in private industry and as a University professor. His mother earned degrees in math, physics, and education. At West Virginia State College, he discovered his passion for chemistry and biochemistry. He embraced the evolutionary paradigm and looked up to his professors which were strong evolutionists. The men and women who he most admired taught him to reject supernatural explanations for the world.

“Before attending graduate studies at Ohio University he met a young woman named Amy, and they became engaged. During this time, Amy began to take her Christian faith seriously. He accepted her decision to pursue religion. He didn’t accept the beliefs she shared with him. But, before Amy and he were married, the pastor who officiated at their wedding challenged his pride as a scientist. The pastor persuaded him to read the Bible by reasoning that a scientist should be willing to seek truth no matter where it may be found and to follow wherever it leads. For the first time in his life, he seriously read and contemplated the Bible. By now he was in his graduate studies, and each evening he sat down at his lab bench and read scripture. After paging through the Bible, he settled on Matthew. The Christmas story piqued his interest because he had never before read firsthand from the Gospels about Christ’s birth.

“Rana then moved on to the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus admonished his disciples to avoid a superficial appearance of goodness, and challenged them to pursue right attitudes as well as right behavior.

“He also said that the way Jesus taught--His authority and

revolutionary message---amazed him. Shortly after this, which he acknowledged as supernatural insight, he recognized Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

“Rana recognized also that the inside of a cell was a creation from God. He found that Genesis, Chapter 1, seemed to square generally with the scientific record of Earth’s and life’s history. He also was motivated to undertake a serious relationship between science and the Bible. This pursuit connected him with astronomer Hugh Ross. A few years ago, he started working with Hugh Ross at Reasons to Believe (RTB). This interdenominational organization provides research and teaching on the harmony of God’s revelation in the words of the Bible and the facts of nature. And now Rana combined Hugh Ross’s astrophysics and his biochemistry research to produce the book *Origins of Life*.

“Brother Bolingbroke shared some of the detailed information from one chapter in the book. The chapter talked about the appearance of early life. Shark Bay is located seven hundred miles north of Perth along Australia’s desolate west coast. It has come to symbolize the wonders of the origin of life. The hypersaline conditions of Shark Bay’s lagoon make it unfit for most life. Stromatolites pepper the Bay’s shoreline water. At first glance they look like dome shaped rocks. However, with closer inspection of the layers, observation reveals that the rocks are teeming with life. The dome shaped rocks were produced by cyanobacteria (blue-green algae).

“Scientists have dated the rocklike fossil structures and come up with a date of 3.4 and 3.5 billion years. Scientists have an abundance of evidence that large asteroids and comets pummeled the entire inner solar system. The Moon, Mars, Earth, Venus, and Mercury show evidence of this cratering, between 4.5 and 3.5 billion years ago. The cratering intensity declined exponentially throughout this era except for a brief episode known as the late heavy bombardment that occurred between 3.8 and 3.9 billion years ago. This sterilization event would have prevented any life from forming. No liquid water or solid rocks would have existed because the water would have evaporated and the solid rocks would have turned to molten rock when the asteroids and comets hit the Earth. Geologists called this epoch the Hadean era, with obvious reference to Hades. This explains why no Earth rocks have been found that are older than about 3.85 billion years.

“Lunar rocks were brought back by the Apollo program. Using radioactive decay, scientists can verify that the bombardment of the moon occurred about 3.9 billion years ago. This barrage lasted for 100 million years.

“The lack of any impact melt older than 3.9 billion years supports the conclusion that there was a bombardment at that time. Earth’s greater gravity would have made the simultaneous assault on the Earth about 30 times more intense. Scientists have estimated that the total accumulation of extraterrestrial material upon the Earth’s surface during this event added up to an average of 200 tons per square yard over the entire surface of the Earth.

“This bombardment gives a window of about 50 million years for the emergence of life. We can see the problem this provides for people who believe in evolution. They say it took life billions of years to evolve. If there is only a 50 million year window for the emergence of life, the evolutionists have a problem explaining their claim that life evolved over billions of years. This is not the only evidence given in the book, *Origins of Life*, which goes against evolution. It contains many examples which disprove the theory of evolution.

“Another thing that supports the Restoration is what I heard at reunion in Neil Simmon’s class. It was the class on Joseph Smith, Jr., a Prophet of the 21 Century. In this class Neil discusses special relativity. Special relativity works when bodies move close to the speed of light. Newtonian physics works for low velocities. When a body gets near the speed of light three things happen. First, mass increases and second, lengths, in the direction of motion, shorten. Time becomes longer. A clock on a ship moving near the speed of light may tick two seconds on the ship, but on Earth years may go by. Some particles are moving so fast that they can cross the galaxy in 18 minutes according to their time. Light moves at the speed of light. When anything moves at the speed of light, time will stop. Or, all time is before the photon, the particle of light. Joseph Smith, Jr. was a prophet who received Section 85 of the Doctrine and Covenants by revelation from God. In this revelation we have the words that Christ is in the light of the sun and the moon and the power by which they were made. The light which enters our eyes enlightens our minds and proceeds from God to fill the immensity of space. We can see from this revelation that the concepts which God was presenting to the Church through Joseph Smith were ahead of his time. Christ was in the light and is a body of light. Christ and God have all time before them. They see all aspects of life at the same time. They are outside the realm of time as we know it.

“I would now like to tell the story of Abbie Frye entitled “Prepared for His Gospel.” Abbie was raised in the Catholic church. She tells of how as a child, God had prepared her for accepting the true church. The first thing she learned as a child was that Christ would come again. She could not wait for Christ to come again so she could see Him face to face. But she was terrified that when Christ would come, He would not know her. The second thing she learned was by reading Genesis 49:22: ‘Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall.’ And Isaiah 18:1: ‘Woe to the land shadowing with wings.’ She pondered while she was growing up what these two scriptures meant. She now knows that the scripture talking about Joseph being a fruitful bough whose branches run over the wall, the Lord was talking about the ocean and Lehi and his family coming to America. The third thing she wondered about was a book which would come out of the dust. She grew up anticipating when this book would come forth. Imagine her amazement when she found the Lord’s true church and the Book of Mormon. She had never before heard of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Joseph Smith, or the Book of Mormon. She could not wait to read the Book of Mormon, and she believed it. The teaching she had learned as a Catholic had helped her, but the Lord also gave her a dream for a testimony. In this dream she was in a huge building on the second floor. It was an art museum with pictures hanging everywhere. She was looking over the balcony at all the pictures when her attention was brought to a picture at the very top. It was a picture of the Book of Mormon plates like Joseph Smith, Jr., had described with the three rings and the sealed portion. She was thrilled and excited to see it, and she wanted to touch it very badly. She leaned over the balcony to touch it, and her dream ended. She thanks the Lord every day for His wonderful gospel and for finding the true church.

Brother Bolingbroke concluded his sermon by reviewing the information he covered in his message. “We have looked at the Reasons to Believe, as presented by Hugh Ross, the support for the Restoration gospel, and the Apostasy. We have seen that in the past

apostasy was shortly after the time of the apostles. And we know what happened to the Book of Mormon people. After the visit of Christ, they only lasted for about 400 years. We see in our time that there is apostasy too. We need to be vigilant and stay close to the scriptures so that we do not go into apostasy. This Restoration gospel is true. I pray that we will all keep the commandments of Christ and stay close to Him.”

Congregation Receives An Added Testimony

When Elder Gerald Bolingbroke finished his sermon, Seventy George Thomas and his wife Jeanette were in the congregation and Seventy George Knotts asked whether we might hear George’s testimony. Brother Robert Rolfe happily gave Brother Thomas the opportunity, saying, “This man has gone farther in one missionary trip than Apostle Paul did in his entire life”. And this man, who advocates that each of us have a two minute testimony ready on a moment’s notice, was willing, if not anxious, to share his.

This is what he said: “I guess I have been around a little. I came into the church at about sixteen years of age, and I still remember hearing about the angel’s message. I was excited to know that God was personal, and I remember the excitement of the Book of Mormon, and of “I will build My church”. I remember the first time I saw that church -- faith, repentance, baptism and so on, built on the rock of revelation. And even though the church has been through a lot of different things over the years, I find real excitement and real anticipation today as when I first learned that Jesus loved me and that He was asking me to make a commitment and to enter the waters of baptism.

You know, I had never heard of an evangelist before, and somehow back in those days, I thought an evangelist was a guy who played a banjo. I remember going home to my father saying, ‘This guy is coming, and he is supposed to be a really good banjo player’. You know, there are just different terms when you get into the Restoration vocabulary such as “the glories”, “the fullness of the gospel”, and such things as “common consent”. It’s been a real challenge.

“But I still feel that everybody should have the two minute testimony. I have been invited not to come back to certain places because I told them that giving a testimony is relevant, and that you should always have one at a two minutes’ notice. Just last night I was at Wally World, or WalMart and presto, here was a friend and it’s time to stand up and be counted. The Doctrine and Covenants Section 76 talks about our being valiant in testimony, and I really believe that; and yet I have been told recently by some of our people that, “Hey! You are not supposed to ask the people to have a testimony ready because that makes them feel uncomfortable, and we don’t come to church to feel uncomfortable”.

“The same thing is true about fasting. You know, recently I have been told that fasting was just for the days of old. If the Lord really intended you to fast, He wouldn’t make you feel so uncomfortable. Who could that be speaking sometimes?” he asked, implying that it might be someone other than the one delivering the message, perhaps even a sinister power attempting to destroy rather than to build up the Kingdom of God. “I like to eat, and I have just been traveling with Ron (Smith) for a couple of weeks, and I have a testimony. Ron really likes to eat, also. There are times we are

going to feel uncomfortable. The Lord asks us to do things that pertain to our spiritual life, and it is not always easy to do; but it gives us a growing point. I would just like to bear testimony that if you want to start seeking and coming closer to your Lord Jesus today, look into fasting. Feel a little bit uncomfortable, and the more uncomfortable you feel in that area, you know you must be doing something right; because you are seeking out that spiritual food rather than the natural food that we are so used to taking.

“The same thing with bearing a testimony. I was told many years ago, ‘You were given testimonies to give them away, and if you don’t use them, you are going to lose them.’ I just wonder sometimes how many testimonies there are in this group here that the Lord has blessed you with that, Whoosh, are already gone! I hope that the next time you meet, maybe at the prayer service on Wednesday night, I hope you come anticipating sharing your testimony of the week. And if you can’t think of one this week, go back a week or two. We will be lenient! But come anticipating to participate. It’s an exciting time to be trying to share with the Lord Jesus Christ!”

George Knotts asked Brother Thomas to particularly share about his recent experience with native Americans in Canada.

“About a year ago we met several Cree First Nation people. They do not like to be called Indians. They feel that was a tag put on them by Columbus. The Canadian Government likes to call them aborigineals. That sounds a little bit like a Colonial tag there somehow. They say, ‘We are really some of the first who were on this land, and we would like to be called ‘First Nation Cree’ or ‘First Nation Navaho’, or ‘First Nation Blackfoot’, etc.’ Francis Harper and I were invited to go up into Thompson, Manitoba into a place called Easterville and another place called Leaf Rapid.

“Before we had arrived there, these people said they had a dream that we were bringing them a book. As we shared with them the Book of Mormon, they were really excited about it. My only problem was that I did not take enough Book of Mormons with me! But they are anxious for us to talk with them more about the Book of Mormon.

“I don’t know if you are familiar with the experience they call the Baffin Island experience. Up on the northeastern part of Hudson Bay, where the Baffin Islands are, a large group of First Nation folks were having problems with the highest suicide rate in the world, heavy drugs, heavy alcoholism, spouse abuse, all kinds of domestic violence. Several of their elders gathered together to start praying that the Holy Spirit would cause something to happen to their people. After awhile the Lord did come down upon their land. You will remember the experience they had at Kirtland Temple during the dedication when the Holy Spirit came down and people thought the temple was on fire. This happened in the Baffin Islands in 1998, so we are not talking about a hundred years ago.

“While we were in Leaf Rapid, I walked this man I call Dave. He was one of the spiritual leaders who had started this effort, and the Baffin Island experience eventually happened. He came and asked us if we could have time to sit and talk with him. Unfortunately, his wife was coming in from Churchill on a train and he had to go pick her up, and we were not able to be there when they got back. But we did make an appointment that the next time we are up in that part of the land that we would sit down and talk - get a chance to discuss some things of the Lord.

“I think there are some big things that are happening. We are also invited to go to another place over in Prince Albert. A group of about three hundred, they are Pentecostal, and we were asked to

come and share with them. We are hoping to do this and share with them the Book of Mormon. So far it has been very acceptable. I don't know what's possible. I just know that the doors are opening. There is another group of Indians over north of New York that has invited us to come. So there is some awakening taking place, and those of you who cannot go, I would really appreciate if you would uphold our First Nation people in prayer. Just ask the Lord to bless them.

"And since I am here. I also would like to ask prayers for our good brothers and sisters in Nepal, Tikene, Tibet, Buton, Burma, now with a new name, Marimar or something like that. You know there is some great work that is taking place in Hong Kong, China. Most of you are probably not aware that we have about six brand new baptized, confirmed members of the Restoration church of Hong Kong today. There are some great things that can happen that if they happen, we need a lot of prayer. We are talking several thousands of people. There's always that old guy Satan, and he is trying to hold us back. There is that thing called power and pride and control, and those things get involved in this, too. So if you would remember our brothers and sisters on the outskirts of Mt. Ayr, we would surely appreciate it."

Brother Rolfe asked, "Is there anyone here with a two minute testimony they are afraid they are going to lose? For Lynda and me it only takes about ten seconds to lose it." Seventy Ronald Smith arose and said, "I was with Peter and Amy Bueckert in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan last Sunday morning and we shared. They had a little son named Shannon who only lived ten years. He had a serious heart problem and a lot of difficulties. He was never able to do anything for himself. As I shared with them about how I had fasted and prayed and expected him to be healed. He wasn't, but I had an experience with the Lord in which the Lord promised that the day would come when His people would be healed, and I have carried that with me ever since. But Amy shared with us that Shannon was what she needed to have the Lord's promise fulfilled when the Lord had promised to turn her heart of stone into one of flesh.

"Amy had never been able to love because of things that had happened to her in her youth. When her husband asked her to marry him, she told him she could not love, but Peter said, 'I have enough love for both of us.' So she went ahead and married, but it wasn't until Shannon was born that the Lord's love was able to change her heart. We appreciated that testimony and it was one more evidence in a long string of testimonies that the Lord has pretty good timing and that He knows what we need, even when it is not what we think we need; and we appreciated the Good Spirit that was with us."

George Knotts spoke again explaining that the reason he had asked the questions concerning the First Nation people was because of the Book of Mormon promises that Jesus would remember the House of Israel, and the Indian people are a part of the House of Israel. "Our communication systems are not very good. Our grapevine is not very accurate, and I wanted to find out what was going on from what we heard at Reunion. If the Lord is going to be doing something with them (the First Nation People), anytime we would get a chance to tap into the sources we would like to know it. The Lord is going to be doing some mighty things with the Indians. In fact we might end up assisting them in building Zion. "

Rob said, "I might just comment that when the good news of the gospel is as interesting to us as the Blythedale Bank being robbed this week, that everybody wants to talk about, then there won't really be a problem about sharing testimonies. Then we will say, 'This is really news', and we will feel it so interesting that we

know somebody would like to hear about it. And if you didn't know it, the Blythedale and the Eagleville Banks were both robbed this past week, and the person who did it is no longer running around loose. Sometimes justice is swift."

We sang the song that recounts the Christ's Sermon on the Mount, the refrain of which repeats, "Blessed and happy we shall be. Listen to the Master's word! Soon the Kingdom's coming, watch and see: the Kingdom of the Lord!" We were dismissed with a prayer of thanks that recalled Brother Gerald Bolingbroke's sermon warning us of the apostasy that is always imminent if we forget our relationship with the Christ and His Spirit and fail to prepare for that Kingdom that will surely come. The prayer was for that abiding Spirit to be with us each and every one!

News and Notes

Congregation Hosts Kenyan Minister

Elder Tom Okeyo from Kisumu, Kenya, East Africa preached at Mount Ayr immediately after the Missionary Family Reunion, then traveled with Seventy Ronald Smith visiting in the homes of the Saints and ministering in Restoration congregations at Nauvoo, Kirtland, and many points around. Following that, he spent one week with the Cameron congregation where he spoke every evening. He then ministered in various congregations in the Independence area. He left Kansas City July 18 to return to Kenya. At home in Kisumu, Tom works in a bank. His wife, Maureen is working on her master's degree at the University in Kisumu and they have two lovely children, a boy aged 7 and a daughter who is 3.

During the brief time Elder Okeyo ministered in Mount Ayr there was not time for him to share his testimony. We now share it as we have heard him give it. Since it was not recorded, there may be corrections that will be made at a later date. In general, however: Tom and Eric Odida were in college together. Each was anxious to know the truth about Jesus Christ and the church in which they should be participating as His followers. Tom was a Catholic but was not satisfied with the use of prescribed prayers for every occasion. And he felt that a follower of Christ should be different from others on the street. He failed to see that difference in many of his faith. Together Tom and Eric studied every faith that they knew.

They finally decided that the Jehovah's Witnesses seemed to be the most devoted to their faith of any they could discover and they determined that each would seek out that faith in his own area and identify with it. Tom searched for the Jehovah Witnesses in Kisumu. Eric searched in Nairobi, but neither one could find them. In the meantime, Eric met and married Pamela Agwanda who introduced him to the Book of Mormon. When he was finally willing to read it, he testified that the "words were powerful", and he wanted his friend to read them, too. So Eric made a hurried trip from Nairobi to Kisumu just to deliver the book to Tom. Tom accepted the book, he said, "just to save Eric"! He was certain his friend was being deluded by a book that certainly was not scripture and might be much worse! But when he began to read, he too felt the Holy Spirit prompting him to read it all.

Then Richard Neill, Steve Smith and Jared Hawley came to Kenya. Eric had arranged for Richard to talk to Tom while the others went to another home to minister. Tom's most burning questions concerned the scripture in Revelation that he believed forbade anyone adding to the Bible. Richard was able to show him

the real meaning of that instruction and to show him the many ways in which the Bible foretold the coming forth of this second witness of the Christ. Richard was able to show Tom how these scriptures prophesied the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and he told him Joseph Smith's story. He knew that no man could have written that book; and as he listened and had his questions answered, Tom felt the power of God bearing testimony of the truth of what he heard. He asked for baptism.

Tom was convinced that he was joining Christ's church but he felt that the Book of Mormon indicated that he should have a personal testimony. For that testimony he asked. He dreamed that Jesus came and walked with him through each of the big churches in Kisumu, finally coming to a little shack where the worshipers were seated on benches. There Jesus said to him, "These are my people". Tom says he was humbled, and testified that it was good to have figured out these things in his mind, but that it was the witness of the Holy Spirit that confirmed the truth to him.

Afterward Tom met a Jehovah's Witnesses and asked how long they had been in Kisumu. They had been there for many years, he learned, with their Kingdom Hall just behind the Catholic church which he had been attending. Tom said the Lord had hidden them from him and so saved him for the truth.

Incidentally, at the reunion, Richard Neill told the related story. In the home to which Steven and Jared went when they left Richard with Tom, there was a woman who suddenly left the room, and they were afraid they had offended her. Instead, she returned with her clothes to ask for baptism. She had been shown in a dream that two white men came to her home with the truth about Jesus. To have two white men in her home was something she had never thought possible. When they came, she recognized this as the fulfillment of her dream. Richard explained that Steve had protested their dividing up and leaving Richard alone with Tom. If there had been three white men at the lady's home, that would not have validated the dream. The Lord surely knows how to attend to details!

Local Members Minister Elsewhere

Seventy Ronald Smith made three extensive missionary journeys this month. One was the missionary journey he took with Elder Tom Okeyo reported above. He then traveled through the Western USA and Canada visiting scattered Saints with Seventy George Thomas, Ron Buckles and Don Saul. They visited in homes and congregations in Billings, Helena, Kalispell and other Montana cities, Calgary and Edmonton, Alberta, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and many places in surrounding areas. Ron is now in Africa where he and John Larson are ministering to the Saints in Nigeria.

Steven Smith served on the teaching staff of the Junior High Youth camp at Odessa Hills, Mo. of which Douglas and Judi Smith were directors.

Norman Nelson ministered at the Restoration Reunion in Geneseo, Illinois, where he assisted in the ordination of his son-in-law, Brian Short, to the office of Elder. He and Cathy attended a relative's wedding in Colorado where they also gave ministry.

Robert Rolfe ministered for the Restoration congregation in Arkoe, Missouri.

Alan Smith preached at Austin, Texas while visiting daughter Erin and son-in-law Peter Cornish.

Nathan Smith served on the staff of Mammoth Camp at Graceland University. That camp is sponsored by Restoration Campus Ministries and was attended by some two hundred youth.

Heidi Winkler and Cessaries Galusha are presently in Brownsville, Texas and Matamoros, Mexico providing ministry. They are a part of a group of youth and their adult counselors, largely from the Centerplace area, that are conducting a Vacation Church School for Mexican children and youth. Both Heidi and Cessaries are Spanish students. Thoric and Keston Smith, sons of Steven Smith, and Micah Bates, son of Karen and David Bates, are among those giving the ministry.

Valle Smith, with her sister Diane Kyser, are presently directing the ping pong competitions at Graceland's Spectacular. Cara helped get the extravaganza underway early in the week. About one thousand youth participate in the event.

Youth Are Talent Show Winners

Jazmyn and Aquila Galusha, with violin and guitar, won first place at the Osceola 4th of July talent show with a prize of \$75.

Gabel Galusha with the violin with Cessaries accompanying him, won second with a \$50 prize. Cessaries at the piano won second at the county fair at Afton. She and the first place winner will both be entering State Fair competition.

Gabel won first at the Albia contest. Each of these is a Bill Riley contest in preparation for the 2004 Iowa State Fair competition .

From the Pastor's Desk

Continued from page 1

they sell their livestock. (Again, no government safety net) After the livestock was gone, the people sold their land. (Again, no government safety net) Finally, they sold themselves for grain. At any point along the way, why do you suppose that Joseph didn't just give the grain to the people? That supposition could lead to many interesting conclusions about the effect on the people of a government supporting its citizens.

Well, if the parallels are not real obvious to you, let me make a few observations about our society. What nation is now the most powerful nation in the world? What nation is the leader in business, culture, science, education? You may have noticed that most of the Nobel prizes have been given to the citizens of this country. And finally, which country is the "bread-basket" of the world? Are bad times just around the corner for our nation? Are the years of plenty ready to end?

Read your scriptures. Jesus, the biblical and Book of Mormon prophets and the New England prophet Joseph wrote about the time in history immediately ahead. We are not different from the people in Joseph, son of Jacob's, day. It is likely we will not prepare ourselves. Are we expecting our government to provide? Our government is not led by people of Joseph's spiritual caliber. What will our government require of us for "grain?" Will there be any grain for us? (See Isaiah 17: 1 & 63; Ezekiel 38 & 39; Joel 2 & 3; Zechariah 12, 13 and 14; Matthew 24; Luke 21; 2 Peter 3; Rev. 9 & 13-16 and

3 Nephi 9 & 10.

The one thing that concerns me the most is that most Americans living today have no concept of what it means to "go without". The standard of living they enjoy is seen as a right, not a blessing of God. The current safety net provided by the government is also seen as a right. Food, medical care and housing for everyone, are our "rights". A society based on corruption simply cannot sustain such a safety net. What will happen to all of these people when the safety net fails?

What do you think will be the reaction when all of millions of people find out their "rights" are no longer being provided. I noticed on TV this week (July 11th - July 17th) that the temperature in Iowa in 1936 (on some of those days) was 113_ Farenheit. The people living then had no air conditioning, no lakes, no ponds; in short, none of the things we use to stay cool. They likely moved to the shady side of the house, poured a little water on their face and prayed for a little breeze to cool them off. More importantly, they had the mental and spiritual toughness to persevere through adversity. The present generation lacks those qualities.

As for me and mine, when the famine hits, when the U.S. economy dies its inevitable death, I know that God will provide our needs. He will not, in most likelihood, provide our wants. Unfortunately, we have come to believe that our wants are our needs. Fortunately, some of our people will have the spiritual toughness do whatever is necessary to become Zion.