

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

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Coming Together

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day; for on the third day the Lord will come in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai." (Ex 19:10-11) I believe that the Lord has called the body of Christ to wash our clothes (sanctify ourselves) and be prepared to receive His Will on April 6, 2005. The Patriarchs of the Restoration have asked us to continue to prepare spiritually for the entire time before April 6. At this meeting,, it is hoped and anticipated that the Lord will give us instruction and set His house in order. If the Body is to be blessed on April 6, we would pray that it would come through humility and preparation; and not from chastisement.

Whenever the church, in times past, came before God in a state of disarray or sin, it came in sackcloth and ashes for a period of time--to represent a spirit of repentance and unworthiness. If we are to sanctify ourselves, as in times past, it will likely not be done quickly. As members of the Body we have been asked to fast at least two meals a week and to pray every day. We have been asked to "feast upon the words" of Christ at least two hours per week. (See "Spiritual Preparation of the Body of Christ") Would doing any of these things violate God's word? I ask this question because there are some who cannot, at this time at least, accept the call which has been given.

If you are one who does not accept the message to the Body given by the Patriarchs, you may still be a part of the gathering on April 6-8. Do we not all agree that we must become one body, embracing the cause of Zion? Do we not all agree that we should clarify our shared purpose and vision, and provide an opportunity

Continued on last page

TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

Our God Does New Things!

Instead of an opening scripture, High Priest Robert Rolfe chose to read a very familiar hymn - The Old, Old Path. He read with obvious emotion:

"There's an old old path Where the sun shines through
Life's dark storm clouds From its home of blue,
Find the old, old path; 'Twill be ever new,
For the Savior walks All the way you,
In this old, old path Are my friends most dear
And I walk with them With the angels near,
'Tis an old, old path, Shadowed vales between,
Yet I fearless walk With the Nazarene.
In this old, old path made strangely sweet
By the touch divine of His blessed feet."

What's New?

Brother Rolfe then asked, "What's new this morning?" He first responded to those who mentioned the new year, then stated, "I wanted to start out by telling you that our God is a God that does new things. I recognize that Ecclesiastes 1:9 says there is nothing new under the sun, but that's looking it at it from our point of view. Our God does new things!

Isaiah 48:6 says, "Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare it? I have showed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them."

The Greeks had a word for it, and new is talked about in two ways in the Bible. One of those is neos which means new but not qualitatively new, such as in Luke 5:37 where the wine is referred to as "new" wine. It's still wine, but it's new in the sense that it is just made. Lynda complains to me sometimes that I never take the same road twice. She asks, "How am I supposed to know how to get there when you always go a different direction?" I like to take different routes to get to a destination just for interest. I sometimes wonder if that isn't from my childhood. We always shot the animals that were habitual; and I learned a lesson in my youth that if you wanted to survive you didn't follow the same path over and over. Those animals who did were the ones that were eaten.

I take different paths when I am walking in the woods. Going from

one general location to another, I try to walk different ways to see different things. And we go down old roads. We particularly liked old dirt roads, when they are dirt, not mud. I really like the old stage coach roads. You can still find them in Decatur County if you know where to look. You can find where the stage coaches went through and cut through the hillsides. Those roads are really fascinating. Perhaps that's why so many of us tend to identify with Robert Frost when he wrote his poem, "The Road Not Taken". For all of us who have gone down these roads, particularly the old roads where you can tell that nobody has been down them in a long time, we have had those similar experiences.

When Robert Frost wrote his poem, "The Road Not Taken", I think we kind of identify with this - although Robert was a little bit upset. He wrote this poem to a friend and sent it to him because they were always going for a walk and he was always taking him down some path to try to find a new plant of something that he hadn't seen before, and before he would get done, he was always regretting that he went down that path. So he wrote this poem in response to this friend not resenting every time he made the decision of which path he took. He said:

The Road Not Taken

"Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;
Then took the other, as far as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,
And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.
I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference."

Now, you are familiar with that poem, and the stage coach paths that we go down are new paths to me. They are neos in the sense that it is still just another path and I enjoy seeing new things, but I would like to ask you this morning, are we better people for taking the road less traveled, as Robert Frost states? Jesus says, "I am the way." Is that a new path? Or is that an old path?

The other word in the Bible for new is kainos, which means qualitatively new, something that has never been seen before. That's really new, so in my case, if I bought a, quote, unquote, new car, it would be neos. If I bought a space ship, that would be kainos because it is something qualitatively new - something I have never had or seen before. Examples in the scripture of this idea of new - remember the liahona in the Book of Mormon? 1 Nephi 5:35 says, new writing appeared. 1 Nephi 6:13 that we will be shown new things, even hidden things. (That's a quote from Isaiah that I just read.) Mosiah 11:158 says we will be new creatures. 3 Nephi 5:92, Jesus says old things are gone. All things have become new. (I have trouble with that.) Again He said in chapter 9:59, there will be a new

Jerusalem. Is that going to be neos or kainos? There will be a new heaven and a new earth. (Ether 6:9). Will that be neos or kainos? In section 83:16 g, and in the book of Revelation, it says we will sing a new song. You might think about it in your life. In terms of if you are thinking about something new, want a new dress? Will that be new - neos?

God's Way - Kainos - Qualitatively New

How many of you have heard of the Ogalala Lakota (We call the Sioux.) They believe that life was a journey on a particular kind of path, that is, if you were religious. They called it the Red Road or "Canku Luta", which was the sacred path that you were supposed to follow and it was a life long journey. The Red Road is an old path, but I would like to suggest to you that it is a new path because it is rarely followed by most of us, including the Sioux, and it is qualitatively different from all other roads. If we go down the old, old path, isn't that kainos, new because it is qualitatively different?

Jeremiah 6:16 records the Lord saying, "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." And again in Jeremiah it says, "Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up; To make their land desolate, . . ."

You know Nephi and Lehi also saw a path. Remember that path in the vision? It went along a river, and it was a very old path. It had a rod of iron attached to it, and the purpose of the rod of iron was to keep you from being lost in the midst of darkness or being drowned in the fountain or lost in the big building or all of the other ways that you could perish; and some of the people held on and were kept on the path.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:22-23, "Repent, therefore, and enter ye in at the STRAIT gate; (That's a different spelling of strait. That means close and confined strait. You don't have a lot of freedom to operate - kind of like some of my clothes right after Christmas and New Years. You don't have a lot of room to negotiate) for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat. Because STRAIT (Confined) is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." You can be on the right path and still be going the wrong direction. Every path has two directions. They don't just go one way.

Remembering The New Covenant

I would like to read a familiar scripture to you, Luke 22:19-20, "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood which is shed for you." What kind of new do you think is there, neos or kainos? What is being said there when Jesus is saying, "Do this in remembrance of Me"? It isn't like, "Oh, Yeah, I remember. There is a Jesus!" In the context in which this is written it becomes a fixture in your mind. Some of us may be obsessed with the thought - not obsessed in an unhealthy way - something that is stuck in your head and you are thinking about it all the time. That is what He is saying when He says, "remember. Do this in remembrance of me." It's not something you do in fifteen minutes on the first Sunday of the month. It is something that you keep in mind all along. I think where it says new testament, I think that's kainos - it's something that God had not done before in terms of the people. It is repeated in other places - a new covenant that is qualitatively different from all other cov-

enants.

I would like to read you a passage that is familiar to all of you from the Doctrine and Covenants. This is Section 20, or just a part of it. It says:

“Behold, I say unto you, that all old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing, and this is a new and everlasting covenant;” (I think that is *kainos* - qualitatively different from any other covenant.) “even that which was from the beginning. Wherefore, although a man should be baptized an hundred times, it availeth him nothing; for you can not enter in at the strait gate by the Law of Moses, neither by your dead works; for it is because of your dead works, that I have caused this last covenant, and this church to be built up unto me; even as in days of old. Wherefore, enter ye in at the gate, as I have commanded, and seek not to counsel your God. Amen.”

Matthew 9: 18-23, Jesus was asked by the Pharisees, “Why don’t you accept our baptisms?” and Jesus said, “Because it availeth you nothing”. Why? I would suppose that nothing had happened in their hearts and their souls from their baptism. It was just another ceremony that they went through.

There is a story about a woman who had Snow White and the seven dwarfs in her yard. These were lawn ornaments, all made out of plaster and she really loved them. One morning she found that Grumpy was missing. She looked through the neighborhood, talked to all of the neighbors, called the police. It was all fruitless! Grumpy had just vanished! Weeks later she got up one morning and there was Grumpy back in his usual spot. He had the same Grump expression on his face that he had when he left; but attached to him with duct tape was a photo album. One picture showed him in front of London’s Big Ben. Another showed him grumping in front of the Eiffel tower. Picture after picture documented his trek around the world. Perhaps the prankster hoped the free world tour would cheer up the little fellow. But it didn’t do any good whatsoever. He returned just as sour and grumpy as when he left. (Lynda doesn’t wake up Grumpy. She just leaves me sleep!)

Isn’t it amazing that God shows us His wonders and educates us in His ways, yet all through this amazing journey, we are very much like this Grumpy lawn ornament. We often just remain unchanged - unaffected, untouched!

Are you like this old Grumpy this morning”?

What did Paul mean when he wrote, under the influence of the Spirit, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25)? As we look to the new year (Neos) and continue on God’s world-tour of life, in the world such as we have, here’s my challenge to you this morning. Let’s soften up and de-grumpify. Now, my wife would tell me, “You’re talking about this? You are talking about not being grumpy?” I say, “Where do you think I get my material for sermons? Just look at my own life and it is easier to figure out than to look at other people’s sins.” I have enough to go around. I don’t have to worry about it. But if you are also grumpy, then this can apply to you, too.

Transformed By The Journey

God wants us to make it to the end of the journey, but not just unbroken. He wants us to be transformed by the journey. He doesn’t want just a plaster of paris grump still standing out there in the yard when we get to the other end. He wants us to be transformed. And if we live our lives in Christ, and we walk in the Spirit, as Paul has counseled. He will take us in to new areas - *kainos* kinds of areas that we have never contemplated before - that are qualitatively different - things that we haven’t seen or heard or experienced: love for the

unlovable, hope for those in despair, comfort in the midst of sorrow. God wants to show us *kainos* things - new things in that way. As it is written, “Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” (1 Corinthians 2:9). *Kainos* -- new things -- hidden things.

You know, this word is also used to describe our covenant with Christ. Paul says, in Second Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if any man live in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new.” And this isn’t just like another new shirt. It’s *kainos* - qualitatively different. Living the covenant life is a journey, not an event. Unfortunately, in a lot of Christendom it is considered to be an event. “I accepted Christ today”; and then it is over.

Are you wanting to experience a new, *kainos* type relationship with Jesus Christ? Are you wanting to experience Jesus Christ in your life every single day this year? Here’s a harder question. Are you willing to take Jesus with you on your daily journey? All you young people here, let me tell you something. Jesus never committed any sin during His life. Do you know how He was able to do that? (A child responded. Brother Rolfe acknowledge the response then explained what he had in mind). He took His Father with Him everywhere He went! When you think about it, Jesus did! He took His Father with Him everywhere He went!

Finally, if you are thinking you are like old Grumpy sitting out there in the yard, are you ready to enjoy the journey? That is what Jesus would like us to do. Or are you going to say, just like old Grumpy, even if you had a world voyage and you went all over, that wouldn’t put a smile on your face?

I found another poem that I kind of like. It is written by Irene McIsaac of Whitby, Ontario, Canada and is titled,

“The Journey”.

We do not travel it alone,
Nor do we know where it will take us.
And to truly experience it,
We must put our trust
In those who will be our guides.

We board the train full of anticipation,
Not knowing where we will alight
Or what awaits us at each stop.
With faith, we hold the hands that welcome us
And let them lead us down the winding roads.

Each destination sets the stage and scenery
Where the curtain rises to reveal and tell the story
Of those who touch our lives,
Those who steal our hearts,
And those who capture our love.

As the train travels further afield,
And fellow passengers depart one by one,
We bid them adieu, sad to see them go -
And we are left wondering
When and where we will meet again.

So much to see, so much to do, So much yet to be fulfilled.
So many blessings - so much to be thankful for -
So many dreams to be realized.

Suddenly, before we know it
The wheels start turning faster.
The once long track grows shorter-
And, as our train approaches the terminus
We reflect and ask ourselves ..

Did we appreciate those we met along the way?
Did we give a helping hand when needed?
Did we learn from our mistakes?
Did we care enough to make it matter?
Did we notice the beauty around us?

Did we accomplish all we hoped for?
Were many words left unspoken?
Now there is no turning back.
We must be satisfied with who we are,
And accept the consequences of our deeds.

Did we choose it?
Was it chosen for us?
Did we live it to the fullest?
Would we travel the same road again
In this journey of life?

Preparation to Hear God's Voice

Brother Gordon Winkler offered Romans 12:1-2 for our consideration: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is."

Barbra Jordison followed with her testimony, enhanced by song. "During the last couple of weeks I have been listening to the sermons by my favorite Seventy, and I heard him say that a people without a hope or an inspiration tend to be nothing. As I was thinking about my own life the last couple of years, I realized how blurred my focus had become. As I have been studying and looking within the last few weeks, wanting to find what changes I needed to make or to dig a little deeper so that when I come as a member of the solemn assembly that I am best prepared to be there and to support or to offer in whatever way to come, a scripture came to me. It is recorded by Isaiah. It is recorded by Joseph Smith. It is recorded by Nephi, and in the Third Book of Nephi, but it is from the eighth chapter of Mosiah (Mosiah 8:43-51) that I want to share it with you, and it is the words of Abinadi.

"I say unto you that these are his seed, or they are heirs of the kingdom of God: For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions. And now, are they not his seed? Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that has not fallen into transgression; I mean all the holy prophets ever since the world began? I say unto you that they are his seed; and these are they who have published peace, who have brought good tidings of good, who have published salvation; and said unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" And this is the scripture that was given to me: "And O how beautiful

upon the mountains were their feet! And again, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those that are still publishing peace! And again, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who shall hereafter publish peace, yea, from this time henceforth and for ever! And behold, I say unto you, This is not all: for O how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that is the founder of peace;"

I had prepared a song to sing for you this morning, but I was led to sing something different.

In His Presence - On Holy Ground

As I walked through the door, I sensed His presence.
And I knew this was a place where love abounds.
For this is a temple, Jehovah God abides here.
We are standing in His presence on holy ground.

We are standing on holy ground, and
I know that there are angels all around.
Let us praise Jesus now. We are standing in His presence
on holy ground.

In His presence there is joy beyond measure.
At His feet peace of mind can still be found,
If you have a need, I know He has the answer.
Reach out and claim it. Child, you are standing on holy ground.
Let us praise Jesus now. We are standing in His presence on holy
ground.

While the music was still playing, Barbra challenged us further with, "May your feet be beautiful. May you stand with the power of your testimony. May you follow the lead of the Master and preach the gospel."

Gordon expressed his appreciation saying, "I don't know what to say but WOW! Thank you for your testimony and for your song." Then he began his presentation, first explaining that he had been thinking about the words, "He walks with me and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own." Since last week's sermon. He knew it was a song but could not remember the name nor find the song. With the help of several in the congregation the song was found and Steven, who was in charge of the service, had asked us sing it early in the service.

I find that song to be very comforting and very reassuring as I stand here this morning. I was really struck by Brother Phipps' preaching last Sunday. And as he was nearing the end of his talk with us, he made this statement, "Prepare yourselves to be spoken to - to hear God's voice." That really struck me, and I wrote that down. As I came here this morning, I hope you accepted that as a personal challenge and not necessarily an expectation of the speaker this Sunday. Sherman's message was very thought provoking, and I have been reflecting upon that charge of preparation this past week. Yes, I would agree standing here, it would be good to hear God's voice this morning.

Housecleaning, Common Ground

Before I continue, I need to conduct a quick survey, and I need your participation. By a show of hands, have any of you cleaned house this past year? Have any of you cleaned house this past month? Have any of you cleaned house this past week? I can see that for some of you that's a more distant memory than for others. But it's important that we establish a common experience this morning - a point of reference and a thread between us. And that experience is going to be housecleaning.

A week ago last Friday, I had an experience with house cleaning - Vacuuming, dusting, floor washing, bathroom cleaning and all those things. But it wasn't at my house. It was at Linda's Dad's house. You see, when we were there last Thanksgiving she noticed that he could use a little help. That house has always been immaculate, and I think it was a little difficult for Linda to see that it wasn't quite the way her Mom used to keep it. Her Dad is 77 years old now, and he still keeps up on the farm with the feed business, tractor repair and maintenance and such, and when he gets done with that, he's just worn out a little bit. He also admitted to the fact that house cleaning just wasn't a top priority for him.

So Linda talked to her dad about coming over on a periodic basis and she would clean house for him. Well, she turned out to be we, and so while her dad was gone on a trip with his sister to Hawaii for ten days, we went over and helped. I wanted Linda to know just what it meant to have me helping her clean her dad's house. I wanted her to know what a good husband she has, so I made this impassioned statement. I was in the bathroom - she was in the bedroom cleaning, and I said, "See how much I love you? I'm cleaning your dad's bathroom." And I walked back down the hall. And I thought to myself, "Yep! That pretty much says it all!" Surely she had to know what a sacrifice I was making and what a show of love cleaning her dad's bathroom was.

And I was feeling pretty good about myself until this humbling thought came into my mind. John 3:16. Everybody familiar with John 3:16? I am sure you have heard that scripture. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." Somehow cleaning the bathroom as an expression of love paled in comparison to what God did because of His love for us. So this morning I want to share with you of a housecleaning account that's recorded in the Bible. Actually it is found in three different places - the twenty first chapter of Matthew, the eleventh chapter of Mark, and it can be found in the second chapter of John. It is the account of Jesus coming into the temple at Jerusalem for the Passover. I have selected to use John as the text this morning. If you have your scriptures and want to follow along, you can find it in John 2:13-22. If you don't have your scriptures, I am just going to take a minute and read that to you.

"And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

And found in the temple those who sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them who sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.

"Then spake the Jews and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up, in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them, and they remembered the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said unto them"

Just by way of a little background, Jesus had just performed His first miracle at the wedding at Cana where He turned the water into

wine at the request of His mother, if you remember that. Then He had traveled with His disciples and His family down to Capernaum, and after spending a few days there, Jesus traveled south to Jerusalem to take in the Passover.

The Passover

The Passover was the most important of three great religious feasts and by the time of Christ it had become a major spring festival. To prepare for the Passover, they would repair the roads because there would be a great influx of people coming into town. They would whitewash the tombstones so nobody would accidentally touch them and be defiled. Homes would be cleaned, cooking utensils would be washed, and the house was searched to make sure that no leaven was found.

Those living in Jerusalem were expected to put up guests, so they cleaned their houses. People in Jerusalem usually dressed in their best clothes for the Passover. It was a time when the Jews celebrated their deliverance from bondage in Egypt. Jews from all over the world would come to the temple to bring their offerings of sheep, or ox or dove. The animals would be sacrificed in the temple. The fat would be burned and the blood would be offered on the altar. The meat would be taken home and eaten by the family. And it was at this time that they would pay a temple tax of a silver half shekel. Jerusalem was bustling with activity and excitement. The Passover was the biggest event of the year, so when Jesus went to the temple, He found merchants selling sheep and doves. It was inconvenient for many people to bring them with them on their journey to Jerusalem, so they just bought their sacrificial animals in Jerusalem.

Jesus also saw the money changers whose job it was to exchange the money that people brought for the special silver half shekel tax. People couldn't just use any coin for the temple tax. People came from all around the world, so they had coins with many different impressions, some with even gods or Caesar on them. It was considered blasphemy to offer a coin with an image of a heathen for the service of God's temple. So the money changers would exchange these coins for the temple coin.

Jesus Cleaned House, His Father's House

When Jesus came to the temple, He saw the booths set up for the merchants and the money changers. So what was the problem? The problem was that the market place had moved into the temple area and the temple of God had been dishonored. Instead of worship and prayer and praise, Jesus found a feeding frenzy of corruption and greed. What had happened? The High Priest had sold franchises for the concession stands to the various merchants and money changers to the highest bidder, so he was making a killing! Merchants were charging inflated prices for sheep and oxen and doves. If you brought your own oxen or sheep or dove, the priest would tell you that it was unclean, and you would have to purchase one of their clean animals. Then he would turn around and sell your "unclean" animal to someone else as a clean animal. The money changers would cheat people by charging an unfair exchange rate for their foreign coins. What Jesus saw was greed, corruption and wickedness being carried out right inside of God's temple. He walked through all of that. He walked through smelling the animals in the temple - hearing the sounds - hearing the arguments of somebody feeling they were getting cheated on their exchange rate. In essence, it was chaos! So what did Jesus do? He cleaned house! He made a scourge of small cords - kind of a little whip - and He chased the animals out and He tipped over the tables, and He ran off the money changers. Verse 17 contains a quote from the 69th

chapter of the Psalms. This is a Psalm that prophesies the coming of the Messiah. When Jesus cleansed the temple, He was showing them that He was truly the Messiah sent from God - that He fulfilled the prophecy contained therein. Let me read that to you - Psalm 69:9. "For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." His zeal was eating Him up! You see, Jesus had a passion for the things of God. I wish that we had such a passion when it comes to things of God. We are passionate about our sports. We are passionate about our eating. We are passionate about our work. I wish we were as passionate about our worship - about serving Christ - about our church.

The Jewish leaders wanted to know, "Who do you think you are doing this?" They understood that Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah. That He called the temple, "My Father's house" That was in verse 16. "And if you are really the Messiah", they said, "show us a sign." I suspect they were thinking there would be something given - some kind of a miracle; but instead He said that it took them 46 years to build the temple and He was going to tear it down and He would build it back in three days. That was the sign, and they thought, "What a ludicrous answer to our question!"

By the way, this was the charge that they used against Jesus to crucify Him. In Matthew 26:60, as He was brought before the court, the record says, "At the last came two false witnesses, and said, This man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." Did you remember that was the charge that they brought against Jesus? And also in the discussion about what to put upon His cross, above His head as they hung Him, they used those same words as a part of His ridicule.

So what was Jesus talking about? Jesus was talking about His body which would be destroyed but which God would raise up in three days. They had desecrated God's temple, and God would raise up a new meeting place for a worship place, centered on Jesus. They came to the temple to offer their sacrifice. God would sacrifice His Son, Jesus so there would be no more need for sacrifices on the altar. With the resurrection of Jesus, God raised up a new temple in three days.

Jesus Wants Us To Be Clean Temples

So what does this mean? What did Jesus mean for us. Clearly, Jesus wants a clean temple. His body was a clean temple. He said so in the 21st verse, but He spoke of the temple of His body. But He wants our bodies to be clean temples also - a place where God can reside - a house of worship - a house of praise - a house of prayer. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Paul writes these words: "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Do you feel as I do that your body, your house, your temple needs cleaning this morning? Can you see that the dirt that is there is keeping you from hearing God's voice? From my housecleaning experience, here is some of what I have learned. It applies equally to your residence in Lamoni, Leon, Creston, Missouri, wherever you reside as well as to your temple cleaning. So here's what I learned. Cleaning requires the following ten things:

Number (1) Cleaning requires reaching. Sometimes dirt is found in high places, and it's found in the back corners, and you need to stretch. Temple cleaning requires that, too. Sometimes stretching is uncomfortable, and I think as we look at cleaning our own temples we will find that for the time being, we might be

uncomfortable.

Number (2) Cleaning requires getting on your knees. When I cleaned the bathroom, I had to clean the tub, reach around behind the stool on the floor, and so I was on my knees. You know what? Prayer should be on our knees, too, and prayer is an important part of temple cleaning.

Number (3) Cleaning requires moving obstacles that are in your way. It's not cleaning if you just move around the clutter, and the world is full of clutter. It creeps into our lives and we need to be mindful of that clutter.

Number (4) Cleaning requires the use of cleaning agents. You know the stuff - Endust, Top Job, Lysol, Soft Scrub - all those products. Those are agents for cleaning. Temple cleaning requires agents, too. They are called fasting, and prayer, and repentance, and baptism. In the Book of Mormon the sixteenth chapter of Alma offers a lot of counsel on cleaning agents.

This is Amulek who is speaking now after Alma had just sat down and I am just going to read a few select verses here, but I would direct your attention to this chapter. (Alma 16:218-222) "Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, that ye may begin to exercise your faith unto repentance, that ye begin to call upon his holy name, that he would have mercy upon you; yea, cry unto him for mercy; for he is mighty to save; Yea, humble yourselves, and continue in prayer unto him; cry unto him when ye are in your fields; yea, over all your flocks; cry unto him in your houses, yea, over all your household, both morning, mid-day, and evening; yea, cry unto him against the power of your enemies; yea, cry unto him against the devil, who is an enemy to all righteousness. Cry unto him over the crops of your fields, that ye may prosper in them: cry over the flocks of your fields, that they may increase. But this is not all: ye must pour out your souls in your closets, and your secret places, and in your wilderness; Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you." This next passage I thought was of particular interest to George because it's a paraphrasing of some of his counsel that we hear. (Alma 16:228-229 & 233) "For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God: yea, behold, the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors. And now as I said unto you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore I beseech of you, that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; For behold, if ye have procrastinated the day of your repentance, even until death, behold, ye have become subjected to the spirit of the devil, and he doth seal you his;" Does that sound like George, "Repent now and avoid the rush"?

And finally, this is from verse 238. "And I desire that ye live in thanksgiving daily, for the many mercies and blessings which he doth bestow upon you; yea, and I also exhort you my brethren, that ye be watchful unto prayer continually, that ye may not be led away by the temptation of the devil, that he may not overpower you, that ye may not become his subjects at the last day: for behold, he rewardeth you no good thing." Do those sound like they might contain cleaning agents for your temple? I think they did.

Number (5) Cleaning requires energy. Sometimes cleaning is tiring. Sometimes when we look at all of those things that we need to get rid of in our lives, the thoughts can be tiring but you need to be assured that God will lift you up. I am reminded of a story. I think I heard it on He Haw, but it's a kind of an old Ozark story about a hound dog that was in a country store and was howling the way hounds do; and a stranger comes in and says to the store keeper,

“What’s the matter with your dog?” The store keeper says, “Well, he’s sitting on a cockle burr.” The stranger says, “Why doesn’t he get off?” The store keeper says, “Well, he’d just rather holler!” And sometimes I think, instead of cleaning we find it’s just easier to holler.

Number (6) cleaning requires time. The dirtier your house gets, the more time it’s going to take to clean it. You want to be certain that you are doing your cleaning as you go along. Set aside time for your temple cleaning.

Number (7) Housecleaning sometimes requires help. I found that two people make it a lot easier to move furniture. When we were cleaning at Linda’s dad’s he has a portable sweeper - not an upright but a portable one, and so as we were cleaning the dust and the cobwebs from the curtains and around, it was easier to have one of us hold the sweeper up and the other reach and clean. So together with Jesus Christ we can make cleaning easier. Recorded in First John, chapter 1 verse 7, it says, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” So together, in the light, it will make it easier for us to clean our temples.

Number (8) Cleaning requires maintenance. Keeping the house picked up and in order, makes cleaning easier and takes less time. Reading God’s word, attending His services, keeps us in order and is going to make things easier for us. That is our maintenance.

Number (9) Cleaning requires a positive mental attitude. Trying to clean house when you are really upset about having to do it, is no way to go about cleaning a house. Cleaning house is not a waste of time. It is a necessary activity. You know, as much as I don’t want to, I still find myself sinning again. Sometimes it is that negative attitude creeps in us to say, “What’s the use? It’s just going to get dirty again. But if you remember, the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. So, having a positive mental attitude and understanding that you are going to achieve joy with the cleaning of your temple is important.

Finally, Number (10) Housecleaning requires a purpose. If you are an allergy sufferer, you already understand this purpose, because for some, living in an environment with dust and mold and mildew is hard and is bad for your health. So a clean house is better for your health, and I would like you to consider that your spiritual house needs also to be clean. After all, it will be with you for eternity. So here are some thoughts in conclusion. God wants to reside in your heart. He designed us to be His temple. And just as Jesus cleaned the temple at Jerusalem, we must be responsible for cleaning our own temple. Remember, we are God’s house. He wants His house to be for worship, and for praise, and for prayer. So this morning, I would petition you, as Brother Sherman petitioned you last week, to make preparation to hear God’s voice. Cleaning your temple lets God know you want Him to speak to you.

As a final thought, I would like to present to you a focus for this next week. You can find this in Psalms 51 verse 10. “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” This is the prayer of David, and maybe we can make it our prayer this week. It reads, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” Brother Winkler repeated the prayer. “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”

Jesus Is Coming Back. Are You Ready?

Omni 1:46-47 was the scripture chosen by Elder Michael Jordison with which to introduce his sermon on January 9, 2005. “And now, my beloved brethren, I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth, ye will be saved.”

I was reading a story entitled “The Wealthy Mennonite” yesterday in the newspaper. The story talked about a Mennonite named Ed Hoover who was a furniture maker from Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He decided he was going to move to Iowa to escape his fast paced life that was about to make him a millionaire where he was living; and he decided he needed to make a change. After his daughter had become sick of a debilitating seizure, he refocused his life. He realized that all that money he was making wasn’t really all that important. It wasn’t the focus of his life, yet it seemed to creep into every part of his life. And so he came to Iowa.

What set that story apart from so many other stories was that Ed Hoover was an Old World Order Mennonite and they are much like the Amish of this area who drive the horses and use buggies. The only thing that separates them from the Amish of this area, I guess you could say, is that they use electricity. What got my attention about his story was how independent his move and his way of life are. He told the reporter, “Our way of life is not our religion. Our religion is the New Testament, and the way of life is to keep our faith.”

I have talked with several Amish people around here and I have never gotten an answer exactly like that. Most of them will tell you that they live that way because they don’t want to become worldly. In a manner of speaking, I suppose that is the same thing as what Ed Hoover had said, but I don’t think it said it quite so succinctly that their way of life was to keep their faith.

Now you might think, “Well, that’s OK for the Amish but not for me.” But I don’t think that principle is limited to the Amish. I have been guilty, and perhaps many of you have, too. I often look at the church and the Restoration and think, “There is my religion. There is my faith. That’s where it belongs. But, as Ed Hoover said, our religion should be the New Testament, or the teachings of Jesus Christ, not the teachings of the church necessarily. That might seem a small difference to us at first, but I think that when we realize that our works are to keep us in the faith and not to replace the faith, it helps us to see how coming out of the world is so important in our lives.

Come Out of the World. What Does That Mean?

In the Doctrine and Covenants we are told to come out of Babylon, spiritual wickedness or the world, you might say. Let’s not be partakers of her ways. So I got to thinking, maybe these Old World Mennonites, or these old world Amish - maybe they are closer to God - maybe they are closer to faith than I am - maybe than many of us are. Doctrine and Covenants Section 81 says that to whom much is given, much is required, So we look at the church and the Restoration and we think, we have a whole more light, we have a whole lot more truth, and we have a whole lot more understanding, and if that scripture is true, then is our response the same as it would be if the Amish had that same light and that same truth and that same understanding? Do we live our lives in a way that will keep us in the faith rather than just going to church and making that our faith - making what we say our faith? Are we living according to our privilege? And the lives we lead, do they actually point us to our

faith which is the redemptive power of Jesus Christ?

Well, this morning I am coming to you as one, I guess maybe as a bad, example. You know, we speak from experience, and I wish that I could tell you this morning that I am perfect in everything and living the way God wants me to, but my experience actually comes from not living the way that I should be; which brings me to what I would like to share with you this morning.

Last October Norman and Rob and I all attended the Priesthood gathering at Kirtland, Ohio, and I shared a little bit of my experience at prayer service after that meeting. I don't think everyone was here, so I will recount a little bit of that. My experience was that I didn't really have an experience, as one might say. I came away from that meeting desiring to return home to make some changes in my life. Repentance is something that comes to us and changes us. I really thought about this a lot. On a Sacrament Sunday, do I come to the service saying, "Lord, I am sorry for the things I have done, and I am going to do better." Or have I come to the Sacrament service already making that change?

The scriptures say that we have aught against our brother, we are supposed to go and be reconciled before we come to the Sacrament meeting. I think it goes beyond just the aught against our brother. It applies to all the things in our lives that draw us apart from God. Are we making the change? So I had the desire after or during the weekend retreat to come home and to make those changes. Isn't that the first response of somebody who has repented - to want to go out and make the change? Kind of like Zacchaeus. You little kids remember Zacchaeus, the little man who was up in the sycamore tree. The Lord called him down and had supper with him. Zacchaeus went and made restitution - he paid back what he had taken. He had repented. Well, anyhow, during that weekend I was given a series of scriptures - I was directed to them. There were several. I am not going to share all of them this morning, but I think that these scriptures point us to keeping our way in this life so that we can keep our faith.

Meditate on God's Law and Prosper

The first comes from the book of Psalms 1:1-3, and it says "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Now there are two main parts to this message. As most of you are probably familiar with the terms conditions and promises, the first is a condition. That is to meditate in God's law day and night. And the second is the promise culminated in whatsoever he does, or whatsoever we do, shall prosper. And that promise extends itself, and it says it shall be like a tree planted near the water. If you have ever planted a tree, you know that you have to water it constantly when it is first taking root. And a tree that us planted by the water has no need for you to water it, but it is receiving its water and its nourishment right there from the source. It brings forth fruit in its season. It brings forth its fruit at the right time - at the proper time - and is able to extend its kind in replanting others of its kind.

"A tree - its leaf shall not wither." Now, from my limited knowledge of botany, a leaf receives energy from the sun in a simplistic way, and it helps to keep the tree alive and to grow and to possibly do lots of other things. It is very important that that leaf does not wither so that the tree can continue to live and prosper. So that promise is to us that when we are like a tree - that tree - we will

prosper when, and only if we meditate, it says, on the law of the Lord both the day and the night. And as we practice this, I think it becomes something that is unconscious to us. When we wake up in the morning, our thoughts are directed toward the Lord and His law. As we lie down at night, we are put to sleep with His law in our hearts and on our minds. I know that in my own life, personally, I can testify that this is the case. But it's only in those times when I am immersed in the word of God. When I wake up in the morning and I am singing hymns or repeating scriptures that are going through my head. Or I will be about my day and a scripture will pop into my mind that is appropriate for that moment. Sure this happens at other times, but when I find myself, like it says, meditating on the law both day and night, these things occur in an instant, and they are there all of the time. And that's what it is talking about when it says to pray unceasingly. We have a constant channel open with God already, and when the Holy Ghost is there by our side, the Holy Ghost directs us what to pray for, who to pray for and how to pray, and we can pray in faith, unshaken faith as the scriptures testify, because we know that God is telling us what to pray for. And if God is telling us what to pray for, we know it is going to come to pass. That is what I think is unshaken and mighty prayer. And when we find ourselves meditating both day and night, I think we notice it is really hard for us to be engaged in the things of this world. So, it's almost a fundamental part of withdrawing ourselves from the world - the main pillar in maintaining the right way of life and keeping our faith.

Taught By The Holy Ghost

The next scripture was taken from the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 68, the first verse. "My servant Orson Hyde, was called by his ordinance to proclaim the everlasting gospel by the Spirit of the living God, from people to people and from land to land, in the congregations of the wicked, in their synagogues, reasoning with and expounding all Scriptures unto them. And, behold and lo, this is an ensample unto all those who were ordained unto this priesthood, whose mission is appointed unto them to go forth; and this is the ensample unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be Scripture; shall be the will of the Lord; shall be the mind of the Lord; shall be the word of the Lord; shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation: behold, this is the promise of the Lord unto you, O ye my servants: wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I, the Lord, am with you and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come. This is the word of the Lord unto you my servant, Orson Hyde, and also unto my servant, Luke Johnson, and unto my servant, Lyman Johnson, and unto my servant, William E. McLellin; and unto all the faithful elders of my church."

Initially this was addressed to the Elders of the church, but I believe that the principle applies to all of the Priesthood and even the members who are acting in their respective callings. It says, all ordained to this Priesthood shall speak as moved upon by the Holy Ghost, and when they do it shall be - the first part was scripture. And, if you recall, when Jesus was tempted both by the devil and by the Pharisees and Saducees, he said, "It is written." He started with scripture. In Timothy we read that "all scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." And

whatsoever we speak by the Holy Ghost shall be the will of God - God's desires for us - shall be the mind of the Lord, which I believe is God's nature revealed to us. It's the why to understand His purposes. Shall be the word of the Lord. From Doctrine and Covenants 83:7b: "For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ." What comes by the power of the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Jesus Christ and is able to penetrate whomever the message is being given to.

"It shall also be the voice of the Lord." From section 1:1b: "For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape, and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated." It's to every person, and what they speak shall be the power of God unto salvation which seems to be a summation of all the others. They all seem to say more or less the same thing. When we speak by the power of the Holy Ghost we bring with us the authority to convince, to convict and to bring men and women to repentance, to the cross, and brings them to salvation.

It says, "This promise is unto all the faithful servants in the church, and so it is the responsibility of the shepherds of the flock to be preaching as they are led by the Holy Ghost, and when the shepherds are not functioning in their capacity to the fullest measure, the whole flock suffers and we are not effective in keeping the church in the right way.

Prayer and Fasting Clear the Channel

The next scripture was from the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 85 verses 21-22. "Also, I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth. And I give unto you a commandment, that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom; teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that is expedient for you to understand; of things both in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth; things which have been; things which are; things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home; things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations; and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries, and of kingdoms, that ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again, to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you.

"Behold, I sent you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh every man who hath been warned, to warn his neighbor; therefore, they are left without excuse, and their sins are upon their own heads. He that seeketh me early shall find me, and shall not be forsaken."

In this scripture we are commanded to pray and to fast continually, and we are told that it is by much prayer and much fasting that we receive prophecy and revelation. This is what, I believe, clears that channel that we can speak by the power and the will of the Holy Ghost. And it's like when a tree is in a drought. There is no water to be found. If you have planted near a source of water, it's roots run deep. They can run down and tap that open source of water. And when we find the perplexities and the horrors of nations coming upon us, we can be like that tree. We can get through the drought - we can get through the troubles because we know that our faith and our confidence is in Jesus Christ, for He is the fountain of all righteousness.

Keeping the Way of Life, we Receive the Fruit of Our Labor

The next scripture was from the book of Joshua Chapter 14: 6-13. After the Israelites conquered the people in the land of Canaan, the tribes came to Joshua to receive their inheritance - where they were going to live. "Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal; and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said unto Moses, the man of God, concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea. Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh-barnea to espie out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart. Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt; but I wholly followed the Lord my God."

After Moses had led the Israelites from Egypt to the promised land, he sent twelve men - one from each tribe of the house of Israel - to go into the land to spy it out and to see it. They came back with stories of how beautiful it was. It was a land flowing with milk and honey. It was beautiful and the fruit was lush. But ten of them saw the people who lived there and said, Oh! There is no way that we can go there! They are big people. Some of them are too big. Some of their armies are too mighty, and they were afraid. Joshua and Caleb were two of the spies - Caleb from the tribe of Judah and Joshua from the tribe of Ephraim - and they said, "No! we can do it!" In fact they said (Numbers 14:7-9), "The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us; and their defense is departed from them, and the, Lord is with us; fear them not." And the people refused to listen. In fact, they were going to stone them, As a consequence of the people's rebellion and failure to enter into the promised land at that time, the Lord called them rebels and said he was not going to send them into the promised land. So they wandered for forty years - one year for each day of the search party's trek - and they all died before the people entered into the promised land, except for Joshua and Caleb and those of the children who had not been old enough to rebel.

The Lord said, "Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it; but my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it." (Numbers 14:22-24).

So after they defeated many of the people, we found Caleb and the tribe of Judah coming up to Joshua and saying, "Remember that day when you and I were there with Moses and the Lord spoke to me? Remember what I was told? (Joshua 14:9-13) "And Moses swear on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord my God." And Caleb says, "And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, lo, I am this day four-score and five years old." He is eighty five now. He was forty on that day. "As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me;" Forty five years - now he is eighty five years old and he is as strong today as he was when he was forty. He says, "Even so is my strength now, for war, both

to go out, and to come in. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fenced; if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said. And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance."

Remember the tree that is planted by the water? It says that it will produce its fruit in its season. The Israelites refused to follow the council of the Lord and as a consequence, their leaf withered and they wasted away in the wilderness, and their fruit - their children - were the only ones that were able to go into the promised land. When the Lord is with us, who can stand against us? If we will but follow the Lord wholly, we can complete any task before us, keeping the way of life that we can receive the fruit of our labor.

Physical Health a Determining Factor

I was then directed to Section 86 which we call the Word of Wisdom. The introduction of it says that it was adapted to the capacity of the weak, and the weakest of all Saints who are or can be called Saints; and I take that to mean just about anybody should be able to follow this. Verse 1 says: "Behold, verily thus saith the Lord unto you, In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation," We are told this is a warning and also it is a promise. And the condition of the promise is found in verse 3. It says: "And all Saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, (And then the promise.) Shall receive health in their navel, and marrow to their bones, and shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures; and shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint; and I, the Lord, give unto them a promise that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them. Amen."

Caleb followed the Lord wholly. I think that's kind of what He is saying here in walking in obedience to the commandments. Would you like to have the strength at eighty five that you had at forty? I think a part of that may have been the fact that Caleb knew the Lord was going to be with him, and probably if he had had the strength of most eighty-five year old men, he still could have done it. But I think that the Lord wants us to know that our physical health is a determining factor on how we can keep our life centered around Jesus Christ. It helps us. And when we destroy the body, we are destroying the vessel that God has created to carry our spirits.

"Cease to Be Covetous" Required

The next scripture was from Doctrine and Covenants section 85:38. "See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires; cease to be idle; cease to be unclean; cease to find fault one with another; cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated; and above all things, clothe yourselves with the bonds of charity, as with a mantle, which is a bond of perfectness and peace; pray always, that you may not faint until I come; behold, and lo, I will come quickly, and receive you unto myself. Amen." This one also talks about us keeping our bodies healthy, but it goes to teach us also another important step on the road to our Zion condition or life style that we talk about so much.

Withdrawing from worldly ways requires that we cease to be covetous and that we give freely as the gospel requires. Interesting that it says "requires" not "asks", but requires. I think that can only

be done when we love one another and say, "What's mine is yours". That can only be done out of genuine love for each other. Moroni calls charity the pure love of Jesus Christ. We are supposed to put that on. It covers us like a cloak. It says that's the most important thing of all. Of all the scriptures, that's the most important element that you can remember. Clothe yourself with the mantle of charity, for charity covers a multitude of sin. It fills us with perfectness and with peace.

From First Peter 5:5 we read, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." Proverbs says pride cometh before the fall and scripture says we have to clothe ourselves with a mantle of charity. We must have upon us the cloak or mantle of humility. It was pride that cast a third of heaven to the earth. They took the knowledge and the life that they had and turned it into something self serving - or they tried to. And that was the reason they were cast down.

I was reminded of Rick Joiner's allegorical comment on the last battle between Christianity and Satan. In this allegory in the book, *The Final Quest*, the Christians are fighting. They have on their armor, (If you want to read about the armor, read Ephesians 6.) and they are climbing the mountain of the Lord. As they climb the mountain, they can see farther into the battle. Their armor begins to shine more brilliantly as they go up each level until they get to the point where their armor is shining so brightly that they find it difficult to see. In fact, some are having so much difficulty seeing that they kind of stumble around and end up falling off the edge of the mountain. All of a sudden there are angels who come. An angel called Wisdom hands them this drabby old cloak and says, "Here. Put this on!" At first they don't want to put that drabby old cloak on their beautiful armor. You know it's shining. It is bright. People can see it and know we are on the mountain of the Lord. Maybe they will be able to see the mountain. But they finally do put on the cloak, and they realize that it hides their armor. All of a sudden, that glory that was coming off the armor isn't blinding their eyes and they can see so much more clearly than before. Their armor is still there, but they are not hindered by the fact that they are shining lights - kind of like Satan wanted to be a shining light. So it's humility that we have to cover ourself with, because pride is probably the quickest way that we can come back into the worldly ways that we are trying to leave, and I can speak from experience there. The scripture says that if we will do that, we will receive grace, and grace is what enables us to do as the next bit of scripture says.

Grace Allows Us to Be Transformed

In Romans 12:1 and 2, Paul says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is." The soul of man, we know, is comprised of two elements - the spirit which God gives to us and the body which God creates for us - and it's, I think, the will of the spirit and also the actions of the flesh that make us just exactly who we are. Paul says we must present our bodies, what we do in them, as a sacrifice. And he calls it our reasonable service. To sacrifice our own actions requires that we do the will of God which results in the transforming of our will and the renewing of our mind. So this is a promise and a condition again. The condition is to give yourself completely to God. The promise - that you won't be

conformed to the ways of the world. Your mind will be renewed, and that way you can prove what the acceptable and the perfect will of God is.

I feel that once I give myself - once we give ourselves - in sacrifice to God, that those desires to be in the world will flee away, and we will be unfettered by them - unhindered by them. It was that same principle that allowed Paul to say, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." It is grace that enables us to stay out of the world and to stay in the right way. That brings us to the last scripture that I am going to share with you this morning.

There Is No Turning Back

On the day of Pentecost, in the book of Acts, you will recall, after Christ had ascended into heaven, Peter and the Apostles were preaching to the people and there were thousands who were brought unto Christ and were baptized. The account says that the people came and laid their possessions at the Apostle's feet, and those possessions were distributed as each had a need. And from Acts 5:1-11 we read, "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost; and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.

"And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost; and the young men came in, and found her dead, and carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things."

Well, that was kind of harsh, if you ask me, to die like that. I'm not going to get into the whole reason for things, but I think his account was included in our scriptures to remind us of the fact that once we lay our hand to the plow, so to speak, there is no turning back. When you look at it in the idea of an eternal perspective, kind of like the account of Ananias and Sapphira, it drives it home a little bit more, to me at least.

Right before that happened, I want to go back. It says (Acts 4:32-35) "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need." I have read this a lot, but I have missed this part. What was it that enabled them to do that? It says they were of one heart and of one soul. If our soul defines who we are, then - what was it it says?

"Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." It began with a humble realization that they owned nothing - they had nothing. And when we talk about coming together and having all things common, and being of one heart and one mind or one soul, it comes to the fact that we are really nothing and we have nothing. We generally say, "Put your money where your mouth is." Because we hold money in a high value in our society. I think probably every society in the history of the world has held money at the highest. And that's really saying something, if you are saying, "I really don't own anything. It all belongs to God. So I am going to give it all up and let Him do with it as He sees fit." That's kind of what I think Ed Hoover, the Old World Mennonite, was saying when he gave up his chance to be a millionaire. It was the fact that he saw what was more important in life, and he realized how he lived his life was to exemplify - to show that to the world and back to his God.

Are You Prepared?

Rob discussed this morning a little bit about the meetings that are going to be held for the upcoming assembly. One thing that has really been impressed upon my mind is the fact that we all need to be prepared - everyone from the oldest to the youngest - in whatever ways we can be prepared. Book of Joel says that when we call the solemn assembly it talks about even those who suck the breast. If it is referring to babies, I think it is referring to everybody to sanctify a fast and to come together in humility. I really felt like that was what the Lord was telling me at that retreat. He said, these are some things - here are some scriptures that you need to work on. These are some things that you have got to implement in your life. Like I said, to whom much is given, much is required, and I feel like I have been given so much. I have forgotten so much - and I am ashamed to say that. The Lord has revealed so much to us, and He says if we don't do anything with it, He will take it away from us, and I don't think that any of us - any of you here would like that. Hopefully you are not always in that same way.

I just want to close with one thing here. Most of you have heard of Reggie White. Reggie White was a football player in the NFL. He played for the Green Bay Packers. He played for Carolina, I think, and somebody else. Anyway, he passed away last month. Reggie was considered one of the greatest NFL players of all time. I watched a few of his tributes by his team mates on the sports channel the second of December, and Reggie was just an exceptional player. But even more than that, Reggie had a greater passion than football. His passion was his love for the Lord, Jesus Christ. That was his real passion. I didn't really know him that well. I knew who he was and I knew that he spoke, and stuff, but I didn't realize the great love that he had. I was so thankful, as I listened to his teammates and others talk about his love for the Lord, to know that he was with his Lord. You know, when people die, that's what you want for them. Anyway, Reggie shared a testimony that I would like to share with you in closing. It's titled, "Here Comes Jesus".

"I was playing in a controlled scrimmage against the Detroit Lions on a hot, muggy summer day in Detroit. I had outmaneuvered a frustrated Detroit rookie for most of the day from my left defensive end position. Then our helmet accidentally locked together on a play. His guy used foul language that I would not let my dog hear. I can take losing a game, but I cannot tolerate being cussed out to my face. I looked him right in the eye and I announced, 'Jesus is coming back soon, and I hope you are ready.'

"He tossed some more choice words into my face and then got back to his huddle. I was angry, and again I shouted to him across

the field, 'Jesus is coming back soon, and I hope you are ready.'

"My teammates were urging me back to our defensive huddle, but instead, I eyeballed this rookie and shouted to my teammates 'Jesus is coming back soon, and I hope he is ready.'

"The next play I lined up in front of this same rookie, and I said, 'Jesus is coming back soon, and I don't think you are ready.' The ball snapped and I announced, 'Here comes Jesus!' I stretched my entire six foot six two hundred and eighty five pound body right in his chest and drove him back about five yards. He plopped to the turf just in time to see me sack his quarterback. My team mates and my coach asked me later, 'So is Jesus coming back on the next play?' So I am not sure why I said what I did on that steamy day in Detroit. Maybe it was just because I desired to live my life glorifying Jesus Christ."

When Jesus comes back, are you going to be ready?

God Wants You To Hear His Voice

High Priest Sherman Phipps opened his conversation with us by reading selected portions of 1 Thessalonians 5 :1-23. "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

"Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

"Brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings.

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Assuring us that what he had to share with us was not preaching, Sherman said, "I just came this morning to kind of visit with you a little bit. There are things that I think about and wonder about, and before I can say them, it is like the Lord has heard my thoughts and (I know He does. He knows them before I think them) he kind of answers - gives me a little answer, maybe not the complete answer but responds to it in some way. And one of the things that has been on my mind, He responded to this morning. It really meant something to me when I got here for the worship service and Sam was up there. That was significant to me. It was like the Lord saying, "Sherman, I am way ahead of you! I'm going to take care

of things." (Sam Jordison, age 7, was assisting his grandmother with the worship service. Standing on a stool behind the pulpit, he asked whether there had been birthdays to be celebrated, announced the hymns, offered the invocation and instructed the congregation when to go to our classes. His grandmother accompanied the hymns at the piano and read the worship story.)

Some of the things - and I hope you can relate to this, too, some of the things we concern ourselves with, and I know that you are good people and you think about these things and are concerned where things are going - what's going to happen - how Zion is ever going to be built. Well, the Lord is way ahead of us. He is taking care of it! That doesn't mean that we should not be concerned about those things, and it certainly doesn't mean that we shouldn't be giving our best efforts; but sometimes, for me, I get a little bit discouraged, and I think, "How are these things going to happen?" I look around me in the world. Of course, when I come to you, then I feel silly talking about them because I look at you people and I think, "Well, here's how it's going to happen. There are good people in the world." Most of the rest of my days I look around me and I think, "How is the Lord ever going to accomplish His work in the midst of all this?" Of course, my job is kind of responsible for some of that, I guess. I spend all day every day with people that are in trouble and it seems like just can't get their act together! (Sherman is a circuit judge.)

Well, one of the things that I had been thinking about - and I don't know if this will make any sense to any one else. Seeing Mary out there this morning, she won't know how this relates to her, probably; but one of the things that has been on my mind lately was the first time I ever stood in front of a group of people like this and attempted to preach. (That was before I realized I couldn't preach and I should just give that up and do something else.) I was fourteen years old. That's been, not quite, but about forty eight years ago. And I spent a lot of time as a fourteen year old trying to figure out what to say to the people that would be gathered there that day. The people who put me on the schedule were smart enough at least to put me in the evening when not too many people showed up, so that made it a little easier for me, too. I knew there wouldn't be quite as many people there, and I knew that the people that were there would be there because they loved me and were trying to support me. And Mary, I didn't mean to leave that hanging. I thought of you in relationship to that because I'm sure your mother was probably one of those there that night. She is one of them that would have said, "Well, this is not going to be good, but I'll go anyhow just to be supportive."

Every once in awhile that runs through my mind, and I think about how I felt when I was fourteen years old, and I thought somehow I was engaged in the work of the Lord. I wanted to be, and I felt like I had made some sort of a commitment there that was for life. It's a commitment that sometimes if you were watching me you might not think I remembered. But it has been pretty much in my mind most of these forty eight years. Some days I look at it and I wonder - maybe you can relate to this too - I look at it and I think, "I haven't accomplished a thing"! But then I remember it's not my work! It's the Lord's work, and He will accomplish what He has told us He will accomplish. He will build His kingdom! And He will support us in every moment every day if we let Him.

But you , I am sure, like I have many that you are concerned about - many that you would like to share the message of Jesus Christ with. And there are probably days when you wonder how that will ever happen. Maybe it's our children. Maybe it's our grandchil-

dren. Maybe it's the neighbors - the people we work with. But I guess what I would like to convey this morning somehow is that we should never be discouraged. We should never give up even when it appears that nothing is happening from our perspective. We need to understand that somehow this commitment - somehow in as much as each of you commit yourself to the Lord's work, and make that a life time commitment - even if some days it is stronger than others - the Lord will honor that commitment, and His power will amaze you as you go about His work and allow Him place in your life. Keep focused on His work, but remember, it's His work, and He will allow you to accomplish things that you never dreamed of. I don't know if you would remember or not, but several months back - maybe more months than I remember now, I used a scripture when I was up here once before. I don't know for sure that this is the one I used, but I think it is. (Doctrine and Covenants 43:5f-6). "Repent and prepare for the great day of the Lord; yea, and again, when the lightnings shall streak forth from the east unto the west, and shall utter forth their voices unto all that live, and make the ears of all tingle, that hear, saying these words: Repent ye, for the great day of the Lord is come. ..."

"How oft have I called upon you by the mouth of my servants, and by the ministering of angels, and by mine own voice, and by the voice of thunderings, and by the voice of lightnings, and by the voice of tempests, and by the voice of earthquakes, and great hailstorms, and by the voice of famines and pestilences of every kind, and by the great sound of a trump," I will stop there for a minute. Well, I don't know if you have been hearing His voice lately, but I have, and I suspect you have, too.

I used that scripture, I don't know what it has been six months or a year or so, because I felt prompted to do so, and since then I have set back and watched, not with joy. I don't mean that, but I have sat back and watched and thought, "This is what He said was going to happen. It's happening." Maybe I don't even need to tell you what I am talking about. You probably know. There is the Tsunami, all the things that are going on in the mud slides and in the rains all of these things. How much of this has to go on before we - I'm not talking about you in particular because you probably recognize it, but as a country, as a people, how much of this has to happen before we recognize God's hand at work, and recognize that we have offended Him, and that we can not do this forever without incurring His wrath.

I'm going to go ahead and read the rest of that scripture because I hope that this speaks to where I wanted to go with this today. He was talking about hearing His voice. (D&C 43:6c) "And by the sound of the trump and by the voice of judgment, and" (And this is the part that I want you to remember today as we see these things happening, and as we experience and witness the wrath of God on us because we have not listened to His voice, but this is the other part of this.) "And by the voice of mercy all the day long, and by the voice of glory and honor, and the riches of eternal life," Then He goes on and says that He would have saved us with an everlasting salvation, but we would not? But He still will to the extent that we are willing to listen to Him.

So in the midst of all this, I hope we will remember our Lord and Savior and that what we will hear, and I trust that - I know this will happen if you look to the Lord - what you will hear will be the voice of mercy all the day long, and the voice of glory and honor and the riches of eternal life.

I want to read another real short little scripture here. As you see these things going on around you, and as you see the prophecies

being fulfilled, don't forget that part of the promise is the building up of the Kingdom of Zion. So, while, on the one hand, things may look dark and perhaps scary to some who do not really understand the power of God and his presence; at the same time, to those of you who have longed for Zion, hopefully, you will be able to see that this is coming and that God's work will be done. And this little scripture says, hopefully to us, "Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still; remember the Lord afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind." (Jeremiah 51:50.)

So, for us who profess to know God, I hope, and I am thinking more of you than of myself, because I don't know sometimes how well I have done maintaining my commitment; but for you who have made a commitment to the Lord, some of you have spent a lot of years trying to fulfill that commitment to the Lord. Others are perhaps newer to that commitment and full of enthusiasm, I hope. I guess I would think of you when I think of enthusiasm (Our speaker singled out one young man as he spoke). Be assured that this thing is going to end up where the Lord said it would end up; and that He will establish His Zion; and that those who will look to Him will have a place in that Zion; and that we will escape and be brought yet unto peace - not the peace that man talks about, but the peace that only God can give and has promised.

You know, I had a kind of a unique experience this week. I hope it stays unique. Cheryl and I both spent a little time in the hospital. It wasn't anything, but it meant that I ended up spending two days in the hospital. And the unique experience? I wasn't making reference to the hospital as much as I was to the fact that sitting there with nothing to do, I watched TV mostly for two days. It was awful! I was amazed to find out that it wasn't Jesus Christ, but it was Toyota that could save my life. Have you seen their ad? I won't tell you about it, but that's what the guy said at the end of the ad. "Toyota has saved my life!"

I was amazed to find out that a trip to Wendy's could possibly be more significant to me than anything that ever happened in my life! It just goes on and on. If you have watched any TV, you know what I am talking about. I watched that for two days, and I thought, "Good Grief! This is what people watch all of the time!" This is what our society thrives on, apparently, because it's big business! And our children listen to this. And surely it has to impact us. I hope everybody here has an area of focus. Hopefully they have learned to focus on the Lord, and to take time to pray and to fast and to do those things that will allow the Lord to work His work in us.

I am going to say something this morning that I hope I am authorized to say. We live in a day and age when we have all these other voices around us - the ones like I have just been talking about. Well, I don't know how many of you feel like you really and truthfully have an opportunity to hear the voice of the Lord from day to day; but He wants to speak to you. And if we will prepare ourselves, He will speak to us - not just as a group but individually also. He knows your needs. He knows the questions you have. He knows the places where you need strengthening. He knows our sins. I think I have said this once before, but in some ways that's a relief to me to know that He knows me. I don't have to pretend. He knows the way for us to be forgiven for those sins because He prepared the way, and He paid the price. He wants you to hear His voice. You should come expecting Him to meet you here; but not just here, at home, on the job. He walks with you every day. He gets there before you get there, and prepares for your arrival, and He stays after you leave and makes sure that things are finished up, I guess would be a way to say it.

But of course, we are not the only ones who need to hear God's voice. We are surrounded by people all day who are dying to hear His voice - perhaps more literally than not. And what can we do? What should we be doing?

When I look out here, I see people that I know care. I see people that I feel very confident want to give their lives to the Lord and to His work - who want to give their lives to doing whatever they can do to assist the Lord in the salvation of the souls of mankind. But we, of course, are still people. To be successful - effective in reaching out to those around us - in being somehow a servant to the Lord - there are things we have to do so that the Spirit will be free to work with us, because that which we need to do, again, isn't our work. It's the Lord's work.

What do we need to do? I didn't come here to tell you that. I just came here to ask the question and to ask you to spend some time thinking about it and spend some time, maybe, in preparation each week as you come to prayer service and as you come here on Sundays to free the Lord to speak to us, because I think He wants to do that.

That's all I had to say this morning.

Come To Zion Singing Songs of Everlasting Joy!

After announcing that we would be singing songs of joy and of Zion this morning, Elder Alan Smith opened the service with the hymn, "O Zion Haste, Thy Mission High Fulfilling". Alan then quoted from Doctrine and Covenants 83: 16g "... until all shall know me, who remain, even from the least unto the greatest, and shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, and shall see eye to eye, and shall lift up their voice, and with the voice together sing this new song, saying:" At this point he asked the congregation to read the new song with him, explaining, "We don't have the tune to it yet, but this is one we are supposed to be singing one of these days, So let's read this song together:

"The Lord hath brought again Zion:

The Lord hath redeemed his people, Israel,
According to the election of grace,
Which was brought to pass by the faith
And covenant of their fathers.
The Lord hath redeemed his people,
And Satan is bound, and time is no longer:
The Lord hath gathered all things in one:
The Lord hath brought down Zion from above:
The Lord hath brought up Zion from beneath;
The earth hath travailed and brought forth her strength;
And truth is established in her bowels;
And the heavens have smiled upon her,
And she is clothed with the glory of her God:
For he stands in the midst of his people:
Glory, and honor, and power, and might,
Be ascribed to our God, for he is full of mercy,
Justice, grace and truth, and peace,
For ever and ever, Amen.

Our next hymn, "Redeemer of Israel" was followed by the invocation offered by Elder Gerald Bollingbroke, and by the receiving of the morning offering with Kathy Akers at the piano. Melissa Winkler read from Doctrine and Covenants 45:12c-14:

"... and with one heart and with one mind, gather up your riches that ye may purchase an inheritance which shall hereafter be appointed unto you, and it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the most high God; and the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it; and it shall be called Zion.

"And it shall come to pass, among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor, must needs flee unto Zion for safety. And there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another. And it shall be said among the wicked, Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible, wherefore we can not stand.

"And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion singing, with songs of everlasting joy."

Brother Smith commented that if we are to be ready for Zion, we must get ready to sing those songs of everlasting joy. He then called upon Anan Smith for the first offering. He and his father sang a short campfire song that he explained might be a little unusual but is very popular with young campers. It speaks of Jesus, our champion against sin. It promises that we will forgive and pray for those we see in sin and teach them to take their sin to God who has the power to forgive and wipe it away for them just as He forgave and destroyed our sin.

Gabel and Jazmyn Galusha sang the round, "Humble thyself in the sight of the Lord, And he will lift you up." Inserted was the verse: "Amazing Grace,. How sweet the sound! And He will lift you up!"

Ron and Di Smith joined Alan and Valle Smith to sing "I Made a Covenant With My Lord." "Many years ago, down on my knees, I made a covenant with my Lord. I promised if He'd save my soul, I would serve Him while the ages roll. I promised to obey His holy Word. From my troubled, burdened soul, all of my sin clouds He did roll. I shall never fear the storms that be. I have a refuge at His knee. I have something better than gold. He has brought me freedom from my sin. Peace and comfort, joy and love within. I made a covenant with my Lord."

Rodney Bastow read from Doctrine and Covenants 108:5c-7c: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths strait, for the hour of his coming is nigh, when the Lamb shall stand upon Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having his father's name written in their foreheads; wherefore, prepare ye for the coming of the Bridegroom; go ye, go ye out to meet him, for, behold, he shall stand upon the Mount of Olivet, and upon the mighty ocean, even the great deep, and upon the islands of the sea, and upon the land of Zion; and he shall utter his voice out of Zion, and he shall speak from Jerusalem, and his voice shall be heard among all people, and it shall be a voice as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, which shall break down the mountains, and the valleys shall not be found; he shall command the great deep and it shall be driven back into the north countries, and the islands shall become one land, and the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion shall be turned back into their own place, and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided.

"And the Lord even the Savior shall stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh. And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord, and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves,

and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence. And an highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep. Their enemies shall become a prey unto them, and in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water; and the parched ground shall no longer be a thirsty land. And they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim my servants. And the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence. And then shall they fall down and be crowned with glory, even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even the children of Ephraim; and they shall be filled with songs of everlasting joy.

“Behold, this is the blessing of the everlasting God upon the tribes of Israel, and the richer blessing upon the head of Ephraim and his fellows. And they also of the tribe of Judah, after their pain, shall be sanctified in holiness before the Lord to dwell in his presence day and night for ever and ever.

“And now verily saith the Lord, That these things might be known among you, O inhabitants of the earth, I have sent forth mine angel, flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel, who hath appeared unto some, and hath committed it unto man, who shall appear unto many that dwell on the earth; and this gospel shall be preached unto every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, and the servants of God shall go forth, 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 sea, and the fountain of waters, ...”

Colleen Wilcoxson and her friend Julia Tilsner, an exchange student from a suburb of Frankfort, Germany, sang “Our God is an Awesome God! He reigns from Heaven above, with hands of power and love. Our God is an Awesome God!”

Steven Smith sang a song of praise for the power of Jesus Christ to heal a broken heart.

Jim Barber and his daughter Debbie sang the familiar and beloved, “Here’s My Cup, Lord. Fill it up. “Like the woman at the well, I was seeking for things that could not satisfy. And then I heard my Savior speaking, ‘Draw from the well that never shall run dry’. Fill my cup, Lord. I lift it up, Lord. Come and quench this thirsting of my soul. ... Millions are searching, but none can match the priceless treasure that I found in Jesus Christ, my Lord. Fill my cup, Lord. Fill it up and make me whole.”

Anan Smith sang “Jesus Loves the Little Children.” Jesus died and Jesus rose for all the children of the world. Red and yellow, black and white, all are precious in His sight.

Jared Beck read Doctrine and Covenants 98:4g; “Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered; they that remain and are pure in heart shall return and come to their inheritances: they and their children, with songs of everlasting joy; to build up the waste places of Zion. And all these things, that the prophets might be fulfilled.

The Galusha family followed. Yvonne explained that Aquila had suggested putting the Twenty Third Psalm to a tune with which most of us are not familiar, but the words fit well. Aquila played his guitar, Jazmyn played her violin and Yvonne sang the words to the beautiful old hymn of the faithful: “The Lord Is My Shepherd, I shall not want!”

Brother Robert Rolfe sang a song from the book of Job, explaining, “Job had three friends that were giving him a lot of static about the sin that he had hidden in his life and said that if he would just confess to that, God would be merciful unto him. But Job kept insisting that he was not guilty. So, in this song, he is actually

complaining to God.” Job describes his suffering, says he is close to death and asks where he can find God so he can at least plead his innocence. “If you know where He’s hiding, tell me where, for if I could only find Him, I would bring my case for justice before His throne!”

The Douglas Smith family sang, “Emmanuel. Our God is with us. And if God is with us, who could stand against us? So what shall be your answer? Will you hear the call of Him who did not save His Son, but gave Him for us all. On earth there is no power. There is no depth or height that could ever separate us from the love of God in Christ. Our God is with us, Emmanuel!”

Brother Smith thanked all who had participated for their music and their sharing of talents then concluded, “As we read before, ‘It shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from all the nations and shall come to Zion singing songs of everlasting joy.’ Let’s join in singing another one this morning,”

We sang the poignant challenge of our earlier prophet, Frederick Madison Smith, “Onward to Zion, faithful and strong. We have a promise that Jesus will come. Let us be faithful. His will be done. Zion the Beautiful beckons us on!” and Alan prayed, “Our kind and loving heavenly Father, as we draw to a close this service where we have shared, in many ways, our love for You and our hope for Your Kingdom, we would ask that Your Spirit would rest with each one here. Help us as we leave this place and go our separate ways for this week, that Your Spirit will rest with us, will touch our minds and help us to find the ways that we can walk in Your paths - that we can be directed by Your Spirit.- that we can bring the ministry of Your Son to the lives of those around us, and that we can truly share in righteousness, peace and joy in our families, in our jobs, in our schools and our communities, in all the various aspects of our lives this week. We pray these things in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.”

Notice

The morning schedule has been changed at the church to allow more class time for teachers. The family worship will begin at 9:30 a.m. each week, with classes to begin at 9:45 a.m. The morning worship will continue at 11 a.m. Thanks for coming earlier.

News & Notes

Business Session Held

Wednesday, January 19, the congregation met to consider the budget. Decisions made include adding \$1,000 for African Restoration Ministries' Educational fund and a substantial increase in the Newsletter budget, the mailing list of which now approaches 160 and the postage for which is high because of the number of pages now published. It was also decided to attempt to locate a folding machine to expedite the preparation of the issues.

There was a brainstorming session in which suggestions for fellowship activities and expansion of facilities were set forth. The meeting time was revised to give more time for church school classes. Classes will begin at 9:45, with family worship beginning at 9:30 instead of the usual 9:45. It is supposed that classes will end promptly at 10:45, and the morning worship will follow at 11:00. The evening closed with a going away party for Jimmy Lin, a Graceland student who has been a part of the congregation but has found it necessary to return to his native Taiwan.

Women Attend Women's Council Brunch

Cathy Nelson, Fran Parker, Lynda Rolfe, Yvonne Galusha and Mildred Smith attended the Restoration Women's Council brunch at the Buckner Restoration church January 15. A congregation estimated at between 175 and 200 women gathered to share in a program considering "The Gifts and Callings of Women". Patriarch Mike Ballantyne was there to address and bring a prayer of blessing for the group.

Brother Ballantyne especially called attention to the coming activities to be held at the Auditorium in Independence the first week of April. He informed us that there are eleven teams traveling all over the United States urging the Saints to prepare for those services. Included in that week's activities is the Worship Assembly of April 6, the 175th anniversary of the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Our Pastor, Robert Rolfe, traveling with Robert Taylor, was in Dover, Ohio the weekend of January 15 -16 and in Woodbine, Iowa, January 22 sharing the message.

In closing, Patriarch Ballantyne said, We yearn that the Savior will come and call our names! ... You are the ones called from on high to serve with all of the energy of your whole souls. You are the elect. The whole world yearns for your ministry." Then he offered an earnest prayer of enablement for us.

Winter Term Trip To

Book of Mormon Lands Reports

Ronald Smith and the Graceland Winter Term Class that accompanied him on the study excursion to Book of Mormon lands returned safely January 18. Among the many sites they report having visited, there was one stele the inscriptions on which have been translated as the creation story, that is of particular interest to archaeologists. On this very large rock there is carved the story of creation that is much like that of the Popal Vou. Until recently many have believed that the author of the Popal Vou was influenced by the Christian faith that was brought to the Americas by Columbus and those who followed after 1492. This inscription had already existed in Guatemala for more than seven hundred years before Columbus. It could not have been influenced by any known immigration to the Americas except those who knew the story as the people of the Book of Mormon knew it. The stele records the story as we have it in the Book of Mormon and the Bible.

Achievement Recognized

Heidi Winkler received Scholar-Athlete recognition for her first semester at William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri. The recognition is given to those who maintain a designated grade point while participating in Varsity sports. Heidi is on the basketball team that will be playing Graceland February 12 at 2:00 PM. The congregation is invited to support her and gather for a fellowship activity after the game at Ron and Di Smith's home in Lamoni at 5:30 p.m. There

From the Pastor's Desk

Continued from front page

for the Saints to share their collective desire and commitment to the cause of Zion? The meeting on April 6, in my belief, has no agenda; other than such agenda as may be dictated by Lord Jesus Christ. Those who may be concerned about any "secret" agenda, should recognize that the saints who comprise the body of the restoration saints have already proven that they cannot be forced to accept any leadership that they deem to be in violation of God's Word.

Unless you are a person that engages in "fuzzy logic", a General Assembly as called by the Presidency of Church and/or its quorums, is currently impossible to call. Does that mean we cannot have any kind of general assembly? If the Body, as currently situated, is in a disorganized state, as it was in 1860, how could it proceed to reorganize, if the quorums had to be in place before a general assembly was to be called? When the church met in 1860 to reorganize, there is, to my knowledge, no mention of that meeting being called a "General Assembly". Yet the meeting was held and the church was reorganized. At this time however, we do not have a mandate to reorganize the church. What we have is a call, as in King Benjamin's day (See Mosiah, Chapters 1-3) to come together.

What is the purpose of the April 6 meeting? It is: "to assemble as the Saints of God, united in and through Jesus

Christ, with a spirit of expectation of receiving God's forgiveness, healing and direction for the perfecting of His people and the accomplishing of His purposes." Who is invited to this meeting? "Any person who adheres to the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ, as established in the beginning, implemented as Christ walked the earth, restored in 1830 by the prophet Joseph Smith, Jr. and reorganized in 1860, are welcome." What will be different about this assembly of the Saints? In all honesty, probably nothing; UNLESS the Saints make honest and sincere spiritual preparation as we have been called to do. On the other hand, I am hopeful that the Saints will come to the meeting on April 6, having made spiritual preparation. I am hopeful that the Saints will be united in purpose and expectation. I am hopeful that we will receive a blessing of the Lord's Spirit that will cause us to marvel. (See D&C 10:6)

I am a person that takes the promises of the Scriptures seriously. It is my faith that we can rely on God's Word. I can only hope that it is now time for the promise in Luke 12:38-47 (and other prophesies) to be fulfilled. Are you willing to prepare? Will you commit, in devotion and humility, to make this spiritual preparation? Create in us a clean heart O Lord, and renew a right spirit within me.

News and Notes

Continued from page 17

will be food and board games.

Jared Beck to State

Jared Beck's Mount Ayr Community High School speech team qualified for state competition. They received a division 1 at state in Des Moines after receiving a division I rating at the recent district speech contest in group improvisation. Jared has also been cast in the Mount Ayr Community high school spring play.

Serviceman Scheduled for Afghanistan

Dan Martwick, now stationed in Italy, is to be serving to Afghanistan in four to six weeks. Dan is a gunsmith in the U.S. Army. He is the son of Ricky and Beth Leonard.

Wrestling Awards to Aquila Galusha

Aquila Galusha has placed second in the latest wrestling matches in which he has competed.

Fitness Award to Knott's Daughter

Debbie Skinner, member of the Farmington, New Mexico, Police force, has received the fitness award for her division. Debbie was judged most fit of any of the members of the force, men or women.

Newsletter delayed

The Newsletter is a week late this month as you have noticed. Your editor was in Des Moines participating in the Iowa Newspaper Association's annual conference when he usually puts the newsletter together. Alan Smith is presently vice president of the Association and moves to the office of president for the coming year.