

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Rob Rolfe • 619 S. State, Lamoni, IA 50140 • 641-784-6030

A Thought for July 4

The election of a new pope, Benedict XVI, was certainly newsworthy in 2005. One of the things that interested me was the American mainstream press "spin" on whether or not he would "liberalize" the faith. The stories pointed out that so many American Catholics were not in agreement with the doctrine of the church, and suggested that the Pope ought to modernize the faith. Of course, what was really being argued was that the church should adapt its theology to the views of the members. The church should be changed by the opinion of society, and not change societies views to what is written in the scriptures. The members were, and should be the final authority on their faith. In other words, each person chooses for themselves what they should believe; they create the image of their own God.

Are we like that? Do we, when the clear message of the gospel is presented, disagree and go our own way? "I can worship better in my own way". "I don't need to go to church to worship". To me, the questions should be, what does God want us to do and what is written in the Scriptures.

You have probably heard of, but not read, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by Edward Gibbon. He had this to say about the Empire: "All religions were regarded by the people as equally true, by the philosophers are equally false, and by the politicians as equally useful" Apostle Paul refers to this kind of person in Romans 1. They were: "vain in their imaginations"; their "foolish hearts were darkened"; and "professing themselves

Continued on page 16

TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

True Belief Leads to Oneness With Christ Jesus

(Second part of a sermon begun last month)

I wonder if we have ever taken time to ponder or if we are just too busy sometimes going to work and coming home and going to church and going back and sleeping. I wonder if that's what it is. I have got a son, my firstborn, Dean, 13, do you know what he thinks? That if life could only be comprised of playing soccer, eating and sleeping, ahh, that would be wonderful! That's just what it is! And sometimes I wonder what we think. What is our perception of life in regard to this walk that we take, because I know if I would ask each and every one of us here, we would say we want to walk with Christ. There is nothing more important in your life and my life than to walk with Christ. But these are times that we must be asking ourselves, "How well am I walking with Him? How well am I walking with Christ?"

The Lord has given that we may just realize that God desires so much for us to be one with Him, and He cares that He may walk beside us and that we may walk beside Him, and we may know that through Him there is opportunity for man, for humankind to one more time be with God as he was at the beginning.

This has been so difficult because we go for the familiar feelings. We go for the laws that we know are comfortable with man in the flesh. We don't want to rise above the veil that is still blocking our eyes, and therefore, we are drunk, but not with wine. We stumble, stagger but not with hard drink. And a spirit of deep slumber has come upon us, and we need to rise up and to see if we could make those steps that Christ wants us to make. And He is willing and is able to take our hands step by step that we may be one with Him. It is not a difficult thing for Him. He says, "Fear not, little flock. For it's your Father's good pleasure...." He says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man will hear my voice and open the door." It's not like it is something He is withholding from us. It is not something he is trying to hide from you seeing who is a good boy who has it. No! It is not like something that He has raised

up so that you don't get there unless you are good enough. No! He is saying it is your Father's good pleasure to give this to you. He is saying that He is standing at the door. He is knocking. If any man will hear the voice and open, He will come in. He will sup with you and you will eat with Him.

Would we desire to be with Jesus Christ - to be one with Him. Will we desire that the commission with which this church is commissioned will truly go forth into the world, and achieve that which the Lord wanted us to achieve, or do we allow that this church is just like any other institution, and we are good men and we are content to learn how not to go bankrupt, how not to be thieves and not to steal and how not and do not? Or do we want to rise above that, not just slightly above that. And I know one thing, because I have desired even sometimes, I receive just a glimpse of it, just like it is slightly a push ahead above you, just like a pulley, just like God is pulling you up, and you find your heart is just kind of beating, you know. It is some kind of feeling. It is something you feel like it is something you can literally, physically touch with your hand. I think the Lord is just waiting for us. I know He is. It is not like it is far! It is very very much like if you could just cultivate just a little desire to live in this state - to live with God - to be one with Christ - then shall He give the opportunity.

In Third Nephi chapter 9:20-23, do you know what it says? "I thank Thee, Father, for these you have given Me. Father, I thank thee for giving them the Holy Spirit; and it is because they believe in me, that You have given them the Holy Spirit." Then He prayed for them, that they may be one with Him that they may be one with the Father; because it is only when we are in Jesus Christ that we are one with God. He says, "That I may dwell in them as Thou, Father, dwellest in Me that we may be One."

Now there is a work for you and me, my brothers and my sisters, and that work is good over there. And that work is with the Lord, and He wants you and me to be part of it. We are not a part of God the way we are here right now. We need to rise up just to work slightly ahead of where we walk now, and the Lord shall help us to move forward. He shall help us if we can only cultivate just a little desire - if we shall only just determine with full purpose of heart that what I want is to be one with Christ Jesus. The Lord is willing and ready to help us to get closer to Him. Because as I get to work, you know angels and us have the same commission. We have the self same work to do in the Spirit of God, in the Kingdom of God in the building. But we are avoiding our part. Therefore we are not living to the fulness of our commission - the fulness of our usefulness. We are not living to the full purpose of what God made us to be here, because we are withholding a part away from God. We want to give Him that part which we are comfortable to give Him, but we don't want Him to come into our hearts. We don't want to give all our life to Jesus Christ. Is it because we can't see far enough beyond what is here? Is it because our vision is too blurred, we can't see what lies beyond? Is it that we do not know where this message is supposed to take us - we do not know where it is that God is taking us to? If it is true that you were there with the Father - that we were first of all a part of the spiritual creation and that this body which we have just got recently when we were born here - if it is true, then we are sacrificing a lot for a very short period here.

Do you desire to be one with God? Would the young men desire to be one with God to the extent that they would rather be different? Would we desire to be one with Christ so that we say, "No! I want to be a different young person"? Because we are called to be a peculiar people, we are called to be a holy nation, a nation of

Priesthood, set apart for God. Or would we rather copy the world so that the things that are in their lives are in our lives - the things that are found in their homes are found in our homes? Would we rather live the sacrificial life or the life that is common to all that is around us?

Marriage a Metaphor for True Belief

(Editor's note: Please refer to section 1 of this sermon printed in the May Newsletter for the discussion on belief that makes us one with God.)

This belief I want to compare to an institution that most of us are familiar with - marriage. A young girl meets a young man. At the beginning they just know one another. But after spending some time together, their interest starts going to one another, and as he starts sharing something about himself with her, she starts changing. She doesn't even notice at the beginning, but she starts sharing in his life. He starts talking about where he wants to go, what he wants to do when he grows up, what he wants his family to look like, the duty that his life is going to follow, the oneness with which he moves with his family and starts sharing his tomorrow with her; and she is starting to desire to be a part of his life. Without even knowing it, as he shares this with her, she is changing. She is liking what he is showing to her, including now that she is so much a part of his life that she can't think otherwise. And when he finally looks at her, he says, "Yes, she is a part of me," because he has shared himself fully with her. He's sharing his vision of tomorrow with her, and even though you may be her father right now or her mother right now, she has already left you because she is living with a vision with him there.

I think that the Lord gives us marriage that we may learn of the condition that exists between us and Him. He gives us that if we can truly look at marriage, and see it clearly for what it is, then we may see just a bit, a little bit of what our relation with the Father is. Because even now you can come up and say, "He's a bad guy." She says, "No. He's a great guy. You just don't understand him." "No. You just don't know Him. He's just different. He's not what you are thinking." Because she has come to believe in him, she is one with him. And soon enough, she knows him so well that if you go in, she will tell anybody, "You know, I don't think he would be happy if he saw you doing this."

My wife says often to my children, "Your father would not be happy if he finds you doing this," because she knows what I am. She's a part of that. And if a visitor comes, she knows what kind of a visitor it is and she knows whether she should put them to wait for me. In our home you will find them more often than not. Church members will come, and they will be put to wait for me and they will be very comfortable to do that. I thank my wife for that. I thank God for my wife, too. Because they are a part of me now, and they are a part of her right now. But the Lord uses that marriage, that institution that we may understand what it is that lies between us in just a little bit. Can we decide to be even a part of Christ? Then we can see that whatever He has is ours. That we can truly say that you know where You are - that we know what You want in our lives - that we know what He desires to be in our homes and can say absolutely, "This cannot be in this house because Christ would not want it here. We cannot allow this in our lives because Jesus could not accept it."

But are we desiring to be a part of His tomorrow? But has He not shared His vision with us, the vision of the Kingdom of God with us? Do we still stagger in drunkenness? Can we truly see where the Lord wants us to be? Have we come to believe in where He wants

to take us, or have we not?

Brethren, it is just a point of time where I think, from what I am seeing, we need to take a single journey. We need to take that one step that will move you from a body of brethren - not really that you are better than them, but that you may take a personal journey - a personal trip - because we have looked around us for far too long, and this time we are blaming each other and saying, "The reason why this is not taking place is because THEY are not doing it. It is because they have not done this. If only they had done this. If only they, they, they!"

We Need To Take A Single Journey

I think we have reached a point where we need to take a single journey. It ought to be a time when David ought to arise from the rest of the Israelite men and face Goliath by himself. Just a little boy as he is, and nobody afterward with no weapon as he had none. You just need to rise up and say, "I am going alone - not because I don't want to go with them, but because I know Somebody, and I'm not saying that they don't know that Somebody, but I know Somebody, and I want to know that Somebody. I think that this is a point whereby we need to have somebody like Nephi come up that when the rest are discouraged, like the father would be discouraged from time to time, would say, "But I know this man here. I know my God, and therefore I am going forth with singleness of mind. I am pressing forward."

Brethren, it has reached a point whereby we need a single man, a single woman, a single young man to rise up and say, "No! I want to find out if there is anything in the promise that this God has made for me. I want to see if I can ever walk within the path that is set out for me - whether I can bring something forth or not. I do not want to start casting aspersions at my brethren and blaming them, because we shall always be going in circles. There comes a time when one person will bring a difference, and it has worked over and over in the church with the people of God. And this is such a time as that, that needs just one person to rise up. Could you be the one? Who will say now?" "A mother, I am, yes. But I am not a Priesthood member, but I want to take this journey, not for the church, but for my house - for myself. I just want to be one with Christ, and because of that power He has shared with me, the Lord will direct me what to do."

You don't have to take the journey to come to the church. You don't have to move, to go out to do missionary work to do this. This is a journey that you can take right on your couch, right where you are - in your bedroom - in your kitchen because you must seek to be one with Christ. That is all it is that you are asking it. You don't have to travel anywhere. All that you need is to be one with Christ and desire to be one with Christ because He says if you are one with Him, you are one with the Father. Many times I find this with me: Sometimes I am one with Christ and sometimes not. But I am called to be 100% in Christ all of the time, all the day - not sometimes. All the times of the day, we must learn to walk with Christ.

Live With The Word

When He talked to Joshua, in Joshua chapter 1 verse 18, He told him, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." He says that this book shall not depart from your mouth. You shall meditate upon it day and night. You shall study it all the time, because if you do so, you will be able to do what's in it. When you live with the word, the word shall live in you. When you drink the

word, it shall constitute your components. When you eat the word, it shall be a part of your body, and your body shall be able to grow because of the word. You must have it day and night. You may ask, "Does the Lord not expect you should work?" I don't know, but He told him day and night he shall meditate upon His word, because if he would do so, he shall be able to do according to what is written in it.

It is only when you meditate upon it, when you study it day and night that you will be able to do according to the what is written in it. That's wisdom from God. Take it. If you do that, then you will have good success and make your way to be prosperous. And he tells you that you need to be very courageous. We must have faith. When you know that this is what I want, you must know that God is there and is willing to transport us to His great heights that He has promised us. He is willing and ready to hold our hands that we may come forward with Him. He is not hiding Himself from us. The scriptures tell us to feast upon the words of Christ.

I have been in this land for three weeks, close to a month now. Do you know one thing I have done? Feasted. We have feasted. We have eaten this and that and that and that. And that is what the Lord wants us to do with His word. To feast upon his word. To sample them. To take time with them-not hurriedly go through them. To entertain them - to want to have time with them - to look for time to be with His word. And just so that you read them? No! Because they are real. They become a part of you. Therein you receive of their joy, and as you do so, you find you want more. I tell you, there are times when I would be traveling on a matatu back at home, which is the public transport, and there have been times when I have been close to the Lord and His scriptures, and I have got into the back, and as I have sat there, I have certain times said, "I want to read the scripture." I want to read, because my heart says I want to read, and I do not know what to make of it. And I have known at times, of course, when I have taken a break between that time and to start, I need to restart. I can push myself back to where I was before, and it is awhile before I catch up to where I was. But the Lord doesn't want that to happen. He wants us to continually - to continue all of the time, and that is true. It is possible. It is important that you have to make fasting and prayer your life, so that when you are working, you are finding your heart will take a break to say, "Thank you, Jesus. Thank you for this moment. Thank you for this day. Thank you, Jesus." And as you do so, you condition yourself. Your life becomes conditioned and you find that after some minutes, some hours, whatever the duration is, you find your mind coming to pray because you are doing it over and over and over. You are practicing being with the Lord and He knows it.

There are those who have listened to that small voice, have heard it in testimony, and there are those who have just been prompted to do something, and they stop and say, "Lord, are you telling me to do this? What is this you want me to do, Lord, I'll go and do it." And as the Lord has trusted, that as He plants this kind of instinct, this kind of small voice, this kind of response from them that He requires from them, that they will be able to respond, He has been more willing, and bodily coming to them because He knows that they will respond to that. And as He does that, and they are practicing to respond, over and over and over, He is beginning to trust them more and more and he is able to give them more fully till they have quite a bit of that. Because practice was given to us that it may bring us to excellence. And we must practice that we may become excellent.

But you must choose that that's the life that you want. And you

must choose that that is the source of your strength - the source of your direction; because when Christ has said He will direct you in all your paths, it means you must want that. Otherwise, His direction would take you nowhere. He will not even move you. Recently, as this old man spent a night in a house, there was this bird that was in a cage, and it came over and it was running about the house. He asked, "What happens if she just goes out and runs? Will she come back?" He told me the problem is that when they go outside there, the birds of prey are likely to catch them because they relied upon us for support - for provision. They don't know how to support themselves nor know how to protect themselves.

That's how the Lord wants us. When we rely upon Him, He knows that men will take advantage of us. He knows that things will take place that we cannot control, so he will protect us from that. So one thing we have to do is to trust Him, and as we trust Him, He makes sure that He shields us from anything that may come our way that we cannot yet protect ourselves from. Men take advantage of us. Are we doing things that we do in good nature that could even hurt us, and yet we want to do right, and we want to do it because we know Jesus wants us to do that. He'll not let us to come to that which will harm us. No! Because like that bird there, we are yet vulnerable, and we cannot defend ourselves against what is laying out there. But we need to just to do one thing - trust that voice, that little voice that we need to avail ourselves of those things, because that's when the Spirit of the Lord gives success to our lives. But are we willing to just loosen the grip from the driver's position where we are sitting - to lose control just a little - that the steering may be let go - that the Lord may take over, or is it that we know very well where we are going to and we don't need anybody else to help us?

Do we desire to be one with Jesus Christ? Would young men rather be copying other young men in their fashion of dressing and working and doing all sorts of things in their life style, or do they like to copy Jesus and say, "I want to be like Jesus. I want to go back and see from the scriptures if I can't get much. I want to pray and I want to think in my mind, how was Jesus when He was a young man? How did He handle Himself? How did He approach His parents whenever an issue came up? How did He spend His days? How did Jesus pray? Because, I want to be like Jesus.

Who Is The Star Of Your Life?

Who is the star of your life? Is it the musicians, the footballers? Is it the stars of our day, or is Jesus Christ truly the star of your life? You know, the amazing thing is that Christ has all that power - all that wisdom, and He is saying, "You try me! Just try to be one with me because if that will take place, I will draw all men after me because they will see what I can do with you. That's the whole thing. Any man, any woman, any young person who tries to copy Jesus Christ and desires truly to be one with Him, will never be disappointed. That is a fact. Because one thing, when you surely, truly get closer to Him, He will make sure that other young people will lift their eyes and see and look at you and you will be able to draw men - you will be able to draw other people unto Him because they say, "Wow! This is it!" But as we copy them, we are going deeper and deeper down with them. If only you can copy Christ, then when they stop and look up at us, we tell them, "No! It is not me! It's Jesus Christ", and that's what the Lord wants to be done.

Now the church was supposed to be a blessing to the world -- this church which was restored. And the men and women who are so blessed to be a part of it are supposed to go forth by their testimony into the world. Those sufferings that I have just told you a little about in places like Kenya are not supposed to be there

because the Lord does not want it to be there. But if only if we shall rise up and be the people that the Lord wants us to be - if only we shall desire to be one with Christ, will that happen. That requires a higher position for you and me to live. And that position is not when we are in control. That position is where we give our lives to Christ. Our lives, our calling is to a sacrificial life. It's a sacrificial living. We shall desire to be one with the Son of God. Is there anybody who will say, "I am going to try to live above these temporal things that I know of - above these carnal laws that I am so familiar with"? Is there anybody here that wants to say, "If there is anything that is beyond what I know, what I am familiar with, I want to be a part of it. If truly Christ can dwell in man, He is going to dwell in my heart. That if truly one man, one woman can dwell with Christ, He is going to dwell with me. If there is any chance there is a place in God where people can live, I am going to live there."?

I like what Jesus tells Philip. He tells Philip, "See these words that I say - these words that makes you so feel so happy, Philip? It is not Me who says it. It is the Father who dwells in Me. These things that I do, Philip, that make you to marvel so much, it's not Me who does it. It's the Father who dwells in Me. And whoever believes in Me, greater things than these shall he be able to say and to do. All that you need to do is to allow Me to dwell in you, and you and Me to dwell in the Father, and these things you shall be able to do." Because, you know one thing, when the Apostles were with Christ, there is one thing that I know. They never wanted to leave. It was so nice just to sit there and hear Him talking to them. It was just great. There was this wonderful feeling through them all the time.

When they were separated from Him, it wasn't good at all. They didn't like that at all, but now He is telling Philip, "You don't have to worry about that because men shall desire to be near you - because when I come and dwell inside you, my Father shall be able to also dwell inside you, and these words that I speak unto you, you shall be able to speak them. And these things that I do - that I perform, you shall be able to perform them. Only do one thing. Be one with Me that we may be one with the Father. That's all that it takes." And that's a promise that is given to you and to me even today.

The Secret. Be One With Christ!

If only we can desire, and with faith say that if that ever exists, with faith, I am going to be one with Christ. But who is willing that we lose control of our hands on the steering wheel? Who would rather let Christ sit there and take control of our lives? Who wants his life to be that life of the angels where the will of the Father is their assent, and they say that Jesus is all. "I want to be like Jesus. I want Him to dwell inside me. I want to be one with Him." Who would say so? Is there anybody who wants to know that if this is salvation, then I am going for it, because you shall only be saved only when you are one with Christ. And Zion shall only be realized as we move forth towards that oneness with Christ. I tell you, Brethren, we talk of Zion, and it's great because Zion is real. It's true. But it's one thing we talk about unity, and it is a great thing to talk about unity, but do you know what? We can never be one with one another if we are not one with Christ. That is the secret. There is nothing else.

I know that between me and my wife, I can try as much as possible to please her. It does not work. She can try as much as possible to please me. It shall not work. But as we both move towards Christ, we are both moving towards one another. It is only when we are one with Christ that we shall be one with one another, for Christ is the answer. He is our all! We can try to be one with our

families, with our children, our parents, but my brethren, it's not possible. It is only when we move towards Jesus Christ and they move towards Jesus Christ that finally, the closer we both get to Christ, the closer we both get to one another. That is it. So the answer is one. How close are we to Christ? With that unity is achieved. Nothing else. The answer to Zion is in your heart - the spiritual condition of My people. (Doctrine and Covenants 140:5c). Remember that! That's all it takes. That's all it takes. As each of us moves closer and closer to Christ, we shall find that our goals are one. Our purposes are one. Our direction is one, because our commander is one, Jesus Christ. He must get a dwelling place in each of us. Then and only then shall Zion be. And then and only then shall the Lord God come and dwell with His people in our homes in that great city which He is supposed to build. And I believe in Zion. And do you know what? If Zion were not true, the Vatican would not be. That's my personal opinion. If Zion were not true, then Mecca would not be. There is supposed to be only one Holy City in the whole world, and that is supposed to be Zion. But one thing is this, are we so comfortable with the lives that we live? I know you are.

Unfortunately, I come from a country in which people know only they are lost. They don't know where to turn. There is no comfort. Diseases, poverty, insecurity, breakdown of our social system, it's all suffering, and they need Zion. But this church was commissioned only to yield to what the Lord wants it to do that all mankind all over the world shall be able to receive a piece of Godliness. And God shall be able to share with them a part of what His creation, the joy that is supposed to be there in His creation. It's only when this church will rise up and be what God meant it to be that peace, that joy, that difference shall be made in the lives of many that are out there. You say sometimes, "What has that to do with us?" Unfortunately, that's America. Do you know why? You are the only people that know very little about other people's history and geography. You know very little about other peoples of the world. Unfortunately, the church is here, and you are the people. And unfortunately, at this time of history, you and you are the ones who are here. Mordecai had to tell Esther that in such a time as this, probably that is why the Lord made you to be here in this country, and to be having those little or lesser problems than over there, and most important to be in this church.

But do you believe in the church in the first place - that there is no church on the face of the world that the Lord God is more pleased with than this body here - that in spite of its problems and in spite of all that is going on, it is the only body in the whole face of the earth with which the Lord God is somehow well pleased? Unless you don't believe that this is the church, then surely you can understand why there are changes in the face of the body of Christ. Ordinations that are taking place right now of women and all that - unless that belief is shakable also in you - unless you doubt like, UMMMM, well maybe quite, maybe not quite. Unless you have got a shakable faith, that the institution that the Lord restored needed a little something to be done about it as time goes, then there is a bigger problem that possibly it is only the Lord God who knows, and there will be a fallout as time goes, unfortunately. But if you know that the church which was restored, that this church forms the only body with which the Lord God can move things, then there is a greater challenge than you and I have realized, and we need to rise up to the occasion. But you need to do so as a person.

The Lord needs a Joseph who in spite of what he must endure, in spite of the problems and the persecutions, must endure because

he knows surely that something of the Lord is turning in me and for me and for his purposes. And he shall surely come forth, and we only need to stand with steadfastness, with unshakable faith that at the right time the Lord will bring it forth, but my part I'll play faithfully to the end. The Lord needs a Joseph who will go through all the trials, loneliness, but he will remain faithful to the Lord.

The Lord needs a Ruth who knows that entering into a covenant here, and, "Whether there is hope or hopelessness, I will remain faithful to this covenant, and at His rightful time, if He deems it faith, He will stretch forth His hands and use me - if it is His will. If not, it will be OK with me." I need to think that at this time here, at least for me the greatest challenge that I have found is that it isn't about my brethren. It is not about the saints. It isn't about THEY. It's about me! The problem is not THEY. The problem is me! The person who is moving forward is not them. It is me. The person who is delaying this work is not them. It's me. That is where the buck stops, with me - not with any other person - not the Priesthood - not with the husband - not with the wife, not with the parents. No! Not with the children. It's with me. That is where the buck stops, and until and unless I start working as me with the Lord Jesus Christ, because it is only then that like Joshua I can share my vision with my brethren to move them across. It's only then that like Enos, I can start crying unto the Father in behalf of my brethren.

Do you know what happened to Enos? This man had to be taught by his brother Jacob, taught very well. He understood the scriptures, but they were of no use to him until that day when he went hunting, and it struck him that he was far from his creator - far from Christ. And when that feeling came upon him, he realized that he was unworthy. He cried with all his heart, all day long - all night long until he received a remission of his sins. He refused to relent. He refused to leave God to go back home and talk with his father. He refused. He said, "Lord, I am not going to leave here until I receive the remission of my sins." And all day long did he cry. Could I just pray, "God, forgive me my sins. I am a poor man. I am a bad person. I repented, Lord. Thank you." and go home? Enos stayed all day long, and it was only after he had insisted and persisted, and it was only until he received a remission of his sins and he knew that he was a new person did he start thinking of his brethren. Now he could look beside him and see where they were, but not until he was free from the baggage that he had.

Eternal Life The Promise

I think that is something that we need to learn - that we can learn, and we can stay in classes, and we study the scriptures and we can hear testimonies and all that, but until they are going to yield a new person in me and you, it will only make us good men - good women. And good men and good women cannot take us anywhere. There is something else that has been promised to us - eternal life - life without end. The Lord clothed the spirit with this body here. It is one now. And he wants that spirit which is now clothed with this body shall yet move into eternity as one. That eternal life has been promised to us. But how many of us desire it? Do you really desire eternal life? Eternal life - living in the presence of God. Something we normally practice with my little boy is, I ask him, "Please tell me, how will Zion be like? Just tell me. How would you think? What will Zion be like?" So my boy says, "We will be playing ball. We will be playing soccer, and football." "And what else?" "Angels will be playing with them so if one of them falls down, he would hold him up. If one is hurt, they will be able to help him to rise up. And he said, "Wow!" "And what else?" "And they will be able to teach us to love one another" I say, "That sounds true that the angels will

be there until Christ comes to teach us until we practice, until we practice, until we practice until we know." I said, "Then where will they spend the night?" He says, "The angels will not disappear. They will be there. They will be commonplace in Zion." That's according to my young boy. The angels will be commonplace in Zion. Maybe not that thing that someone will say, "I saw an angel", and they will say, "No." They will be on the streets of Zion. "How many boys will beat one another?" "None! No. Nobody will beat one another."

In their eyes, in a child's mind, they can see Zion. But in that lies the need for the desire of their heart where nobody will beat one another. The concern of somebody hurting another is brought forth in the desire to be in Zion. That's what's good. That's godliness. Do we desire eternal life? Do we desire Zion? Do we think it is something we have a part of? If it would come today, would we start looking around and say, "What am I going to do with this? What am I going to do with that? What will be left of my piano - if you have a beautiful one. Will I start carrying that?" Do you see yourself as not really looking forward to Zion? But oneness with Christ, because that's where we begin. The journey is won, brother. Live for Christ, because when we receive that, then we can start talking of Zion.

Right now there are many problems in our families and in our homes. And each one of us wants to be the driver. Who will leave our homes, our families in the hands of Christ? Who will make prayer to be the instrument that shall bring forth peace in our homes? Who is not knowing very well that I got into this marriage, and who it was not me that brought me this far. It is the Lord brought me this far, it belongs to Him, not to me. Who will know that this husband, this woman, wife was given to me by God. And in her and Him, I want to see only godliness. I want to keep Christ in her. With much prayer is what I will put my relations with her - with these little children I am given. What do I know it all and have all of the answers to the boys and the girls and my wife, my husband? Is Christ really literally in every aspect of our life, or is there some part of our life that we know well enough. "This one I can take care of? When they are sick, or sickly and they can't be taken to the hospital, then I will pray to God. But when it comes to this, I know." Or would we rather have Christ in everything that we do? Is He living in your business - in your job - in your education? Is He the one, or do we know exactly where we want this education to take us, or this business to take us, or this job to take us? We know clearly where, or is Christ an integral every day, every moment part of what you are doing?

What are we talking with our little ones at home? I tell you my wife tells my boys, "Your father will not be happy with this." We need to change that. It needs to be Christ who is not going to be happy with this. It will not make the Lord to be happy. Because the father will never go everywhere - the mother will never go everywhere, we need to make our kids to know that the center of life is Christ, and we need to realize that the center of everything is Christ. Is Christ our everything? Is He your everything? Is He your everything? Do you want to include Him into everything. Do you want to make Him know that you are not going do that even if you can say, "Lord, if I am going to be late with this, I am going to be late, fine! But until you let me to go, I will not go. If I lose, I lose, but until I am so clear that this is what you want me to do, I will not do it. Let there be loses. Let things go bad, but I am going to trust in You because I have chosen henceforth that I am going to be one with Jesus Christ." That does not just include praying, because I know we are getting it wrong. Sometimes I think we are just praying

and He says, "No!" It is our life. Everything that we do, Christ must come in.

Your children are going out, and they come back home. We need to be praying as they go out and praying as they come back home - praying for them and for people who will be affecting their lives every day. And we need to pray for our parents every day, all the time - not just at bedtime, not just at breakfast time. We need to pray as often as we remember, and then we need to go just a little bit higher. When somebody come to my mind, I need to pray, "Lord. What about that. What about that brother who is coming to my mind? What about that sister, Lord? Anything in particular that you want me to know about him?" Do we make Jesus Christ the center of our lives? That's the question. Can He be our everything? Or would we rather just call on Him when we think it is convenient - when it's time now to call on Him.

Let Jesus be our all, our everything. Let him be our beginning and our end. So that if it be in illness, so let it be, because in Christ, we are. If I am sick in Christ, that's wonderful. If I die, I die in Christ. That's great! If I live, what does Paul say? Strong statement, that for me to die is gain. Do you want to say so? Paul says, for me to die is to gain. Who of us wants to die. Not me! But Paul says for him to die is to gain. But if he ever lives one more day, one more hour, "I live for Christ". That's what Paul says. Isn't that something? That is something. Then he calls us to perfection, "Be ye perfect even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect," because He knows that with Jesus Christ, it is possible. But then, constantly we need to know that my life is a sacrificial life. And a life that is doing everything, saying everything with love. Love must be the motivating factor.

I tell my boys, they don't do it, not most of the time. I tell them, once your friend will hit you. Cry because of the pain. Tears were given for you to cry with. But after it is ended, find room somewhere and pray for them. Just pray for them. Your brother will disappoint you. Cry if you must cry, but do one thing after it is ended. Go out and pray for him. Just go and pray for him, and ask God, "Lord, forgive me for feeling so hard toward him, but help me to forgive him. Can we practice this? Can we practice this until it is a part of us? Do we desire to live with Christ - one with him?"

At the assembly, for those who attended, during one of the evening services it was said that the better days for the Restored church of Jesus Christ are yet ahead of us. I believe that. I know it is true, because I have looked at the hymns of the Restoration, and let me tell you brothers, there is something that ministers to me greatly. The "Hymns of the Restoration". Look at those words afresh. Just feel those words. Those brethren knew where they were going to. They had a vision of Zion ahead of them. They were people who were moving. You know one thing, I see them when I sing hymns of the Restoration, our people were literally moving. They were on an exodus, going to someplace. They were moving. They were not stationary. You could just see they were nearly getting somewhere. As to why they didn't get, don't ask me. But I can see in almost every one hymn of the Restoration after another, just that vision, like these men and women were just about to reach across Jordan. Strangely enough, those hymns are one after another after another, but they have not ministered to us. They have not.

But look at it. Just feel those words. Even then they knew the day was just there, just next door - just tomorrow. It is just a few steps away. And with that, I know that better days of the Restored Gospel church are yet ahead of us. It's just yet ahead of us. If only we could press forward - press forward with steadfastness, unshak-

able with belief, not wavering - gathering our children and focusing them on tomorrow -- on the kingdom -- on the everlasting life, and sharing that vision of Christ, and looking, searching through the scriptures to see anything that could point them - that could point our families, ourselves to the promise of God - to His kingdom - to life in eternity with Him. I tell you this is what it is going to be, and pointing them toward the light, so that although there may be darkness right now, yet they can see a light ahead of them, and they can go steadfastly toward that light. Then we will be moving like those saints were moving. And they see it. And there is a deeper well than I can ever be able to imagine. And there is a higher place than I have ever known, And I believe there is a higher place than I have ever known. God bless you.

This Is the Hastening Time. Let's Make It Happen!

Our speaker of the hour first commented on the commitment of those who attend regularly and the joy that the presence of others in the congregation brings, which included twenty Center Place Restoration School youth and their three sponsors. Of those who attend regularly, he said, "It shows a commitment to the gospel. I know it's not easy sometimes to make the effort. Some mornings you feel like, 'Gosh! I just can't do this this morning. I just can't get up.' I know it's tough, but when you really want something, you make the effort to get to it."

Priest Ed Anderson then read 1 Nephi 3:26-28, "I, Nephi, was desirous also that I might see, and hear, and know of these things, by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him, as well in times of old as in the time that he should manifest himself unto the children of men; For he is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. And the way is prepared for all men from the foundation of the world, if it so be that they repent and come unto him;"

When God and Christ stood in creation, they knew at that time the whole scenario. They knew that Christ was going to come. They knew that the man they put in the Garden of Eden was going to fall. How long it took for Adam and Eve to transgress and partake of the forbidden fruit - was that centuries? Was that millions of years? What was it? But they knew that man was going to fall by his nature, and by the nature of Satan's temptations. And in that fall they also knew that the way was prepared for the redemption of man to again reenter God's presence. They needed someone to pay that price - someone to take upon Himself the sins of the world, to make us pure through His sacrifice.

How many of us are experts at any particular field? I know we have some math people here. I know we have a carpenter. Kent is kind of a carpenter type person. George is kind of an artist. Does anyone else have any particular talents here? I know that Tim is kind of "carpenterish", too.

A carpenter is a kind of an easy one to do. Math maybe, but that is a kind of an exact, precise science, isn't it? (A mathematician in the congregation spoke up declaring that he thinks the math is easier than the carpentry!) Our speaker responded that it is a matter of point of view, but when you come up with the wrong answer in Math, it is the wrong answer. There's no way else to get there, but

some of the other disciplines, even nursing, even being a doctor -- ----. I was just observing this stand (the pulpit) as I was getting up here, and I said, "That has an imperfection in it! It's not quite really right." To the untrained eye, it is probably really perfect. I did some auto body and fender work, and when you do auto body and fender work, every body would say, "Oh great! That was a great, great job that you did!" or as a carpenter they may say, "That is a great, great house that you built." And I am thinking, "Gosh! Can't they see my mistakes? Can't they see where I messed up? Can't they see that particular curve doesn't really fit right? It doesn't fit the way it is really supposed to fit!"

God Sees Us Differently

Sometimes I think that's the way it is when God looks at us. We look at ourselves from the imperfect view and feel that in everything I am just doing OK. And God kind of looks at us from the standpoint of, "Well, hey! You know, that curve doesn't quite fit! You just didn't quite do what you were supposed to do on that one! Or your paint, you know it's fuzzy, it splattered. You know, you've got a run down that corner." Maybe we should pray sometimes to view ourselves as God sees us.

You know, I tried that as a young person and I was shown some things that I needed to change. I saw some things I really didn't like, and I wasn't really ready to get what I got; because I got more than I wanted. I saw more than I wanted! I had a choice. I either had to change or just write it all off and say, "I can't do that!" I made the change. I decided the effort was worth it. The effort was worth it to study the scriptures. The effort was worth it to pray and to fast. The rewards are great, not that we are after rewards necessarily from this. I think when we look at the after life, if we are doing the things that we are doing because we are expecting a reward, I think we are doing it for the wrong reason. We should do it because we love Christ, and loving Christ, you know He has set the example for loving our fellow men. And if we follow Him, you know, He loved us, we need to love those around us also. We need to love more than that. We need to love ourselves. We must learn to love ourselves, to accept ourselves, to develop ourselves, to change ourselves. There are so many things, so many avenues, so many paths that we have to choose from. I think that we kind of simplify that. We say, We've got to go to school. We've got to take math, and we've got to do this, and we've got to go to work. We've got to go to the gas station. Got to go to the grocery store. But there are so many other choices. They may be in the way we do things.

My brother kind of floored me with a comment. He was raised in the church. He is more or less inactive so far as the church goes. I think he still believes, but I'm not really absolutely positive about that. He has made some comments. I've got two brothers and this one made a comment about himself and my other brother. You would have to know my brother. He is the kind of an individual that at least in his youth he worked from sun up to sun down and until midnight. He would work a full time job and then try to farm on top of that and run cows. So he would be spending seven days a week, more or less twenty hours a day working. The other brother would say, "I don't know whether I want to work today. If I want to work today, I'll work. If not, I'll take the day off. It doesn't really matter." He ran a car shop for awhile, and he spent more time at coffee than he did working in cars. The comment of my brother concerning the other one was, "At least, one thing about it, he has enjoyed his life."

At one time the one brother was so bent on success that he was going to farm. He was going to make a lot of money. He was going to be a very successful person. He drove himself to achieve that.

Now he is kind of laid back and says, "Well, Gosh! I have missed out on a lot because I haven't taken time to view the small animals (Presider Rodney Bastow had thanked the Lord for the small animals that are so much a gift of God at this time of year in his invocational prayer.) or smell the roses, however you want to say it. But now he is sixtyish and he is kind of viewing his life and saying, "Gosh! Maybe I should have done something different."

Time, A Gift From God

There is one thing I will guarantee you about time. Time never stops. Once you spend it, it's gone. I remember when I was not any older than you kids, (Referring to the Junior High youth in the conjugation.) I thought, "Well, thirty five. That's really, really old!" Now that I am past thirty five, I think that seventy might be tipping the elderly scale!

What do we usually exchange time for? We go to work. Don't we exchange time for money? My father-in-law, Warren who has passed away, thought I kind of drove fast. When I was driving back and forth to Des Moines, that was more or less true. Once in awhile I would get a ticket. That invariably happens, you know, when you are not watching. But in my excessive speed, I gave myself maybe a half an hour more per day at home. In essence, if I spent a hundred dollars for a ticket per year, I was doing pretty good. I was exchanging a lot of time for a little money, right? I had a method to the madness. (A voice from the congregation said, "But you had a problem taking communion, didn't you?") Our speaker answered, Probably, if you want to look at it that way, yes. It doesn't work. It doesn't work to repent when you keep doing it. If you keep doing whatever is wrong, it doesn't work to repent; because to repent means you stop doing what you are doing wrong.

Again, time is keeping on ticking, guys, and our decisions - what we do - there is no turning back. It's kind of like money. Once you spend money, that dollar, that five dollars that I kind of decided more or less to throw away, I'll never ever have that back again, never. I will have different money back, but I will never have the money I threw away. There is something about making a lot of money that is bad, and that is, once you have money that you don't feel like you need to depend on, you have a tendency to throw more of it away. "Gosh, you know, I don't have to worry about that fifty dollars that I spend. I've got another hundred thousand coming in this year. Fifty dollars is not going to hurt me! You know, if I'm making five million a year, gosh, that hundred thousand dollar party I am going to throw on Friday night, that's not going to hurt me!" The more money you have the more you have a tendency to throw larger amounts away, and it doesn't click up here somewhere. But that hundred thousand dollars - that five dollars - whatever amount you throw away, you will never have that money ever, ever, ever again. That time that you throw away, you will never, ever, ever have that time back. That time is gone! The investment that you make is important. When you stand before God and Christ in judgment, they will ask you, "What did you do with your time? What have you done for Me?" Each and every person is going to have to answer that question, and each and every person is going to have to truthfully say what I have done. There are no excuses there. You know, I have done some substitute teaching, and I have done some coaching of the sixth grade, and there is always an excuse involved. "Well, I didn't know. You didn't tell me that." "Yes, I said everything but that." When you stand before God and Christ, you are not going to be able to - there won't be any excuse.

But what we do today is enroute to gain His presence again. Each and every day we do things that are not quite acceptable

because we are human. Some of it, maybe we just don't see ourselves the way we need to be seeing ourselves. But God's forgiveness is what we partake of at repentance and promise a change of life. We can change life. When we lived down in Independence, there was the philosophy and feeling, I guess, that more meetings brought salvation. You could attend any number of meetings. Monday night was Priesthood meeting night. Tuesday night we went visiting. Wednesday night was prayer meeting. Thursday night, I'm not sure. Saturday you could go and participate in any number of church events, and Sunday, obviously, you had Sunday morning service. You had a Sunday afternoon class and Sunday evening church. At least some of the individuals felt that the more meetings, the more prayer, the more fasting, the more salvation. I had an experience that well demonstrated some of the philosophy.

I think I had to go to Nauvoo one time and I had to bring the train back because I didn't have the car. I called up one of the individuals in the church who attended every meeting, participated in every church activity, and I asked him, "Could you come pick me up from the train station downtown Kansas City." Do you know what his response was? "I can't. I've got to go to the Sunday afternoon adult class!" Where's the religion here. Where is the Christianity? Where's the help? You know, I am in need of help, and you are going to go to class instead of coming to pick me up. And I am thinking, "Gosh. Something has got to be wrong!" What is needed is a change of heart. We need to do these things because we love Christ. - not for appearances. We have sometimes said this of other churches, people are there for appearances. Let's not make it that way. We are here because we love Christ. We are here because we are going to commit ourselves to Christ - to keep our spiritual ears and eyes open.

It's so easy to run to the store, run and get what you want and never really notice anything, I mean, in particular. You go into a big store and a lot of things are going on. A lot of things are going on with people around you if you take the time to look. There are times when you go to the checkout counter and an individual doesn't have enough money. You can tell they don't have enough money, that is if you notice. You can tell they are scraping the bottom of their pockets to pay for the necessities which they are buying. I have seen individuals slip ten dollars into somebody else's cart and never say a word to them. I have seen individuals pay for other people's purchases because they knew they didn't have that money. So the need for service is there. The need for a change in our life is there. Some of you are too young to remember, and I just barely remember because it was said so many times - in 1965, it was said, "Well gosh! We are thinking that Christ is going to come in 1970. This is the hastening time!" Doctrine and Covenants, Frederick Madison Smith, 1915 says, "This is the hastening time." Again section 135, 1925, Frederick Madison Smith says, "This is the hastening time." 1948, Israel A. Smith in Section 141 says, "This is the hastening time." That is 1948, 57 years ago, "This is the hastening time." How hastening? If it was the hastening time in 1948, how hastening time is it now? It's a good question. Or are we just blowing smoke again. Like I said, 1965 they were saying, "Christ is coming by 1970!", and I wondered, "Gosh! I really would like to experience getting married and having kids. I hope I can get that done." Well, I think I did that. I think I have got kids and I think I have got grand kids. "So let the hastening times roll. Right? I've got every thing done!" But let's make it happen this time! Step up and say, "Here am I, Lord. Send me!"

The Promise of Zion.

Get on the Bus!

Priest Rodney Bastow spoke concerning the coming of Zion the second Sunday of May. For his scripture he read 4th Nephi 1:1-7: "And it came to pass that the thirty and fourth year passed away, and also the thirty and fifth, and behold the disciples of Jesus had formed a church of Christ in all the lands round about. And as many as did come unto them, and did truly repent of their sins, were baptized in the name of Jesus; and they did also receive the Holy Ghost. And it came to pass in the thirty and sixth year, the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another; And they had all things common among them, therefore they were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift.

"And it came to pass that the thirty and seventh year passed away also, and there still continued to be peace in the land. And there were great and marvelous works wrought by the disciples of Jesus, insomuch that they did heal the sick, and raise the dead, and cause the lame to walk, and the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear; And all manner of miracles did they work among the children of men; and in nothing did they work miracles save it were in the name of Jesus."

He closed the reading with, "Stay tuned to that, for I will be back.

Introductory Remarks

A week ago, when I was up here presiding, I thought that I might prefer speaking. Today I wonder why I ever thought that. I am thankful for this opportunity to be here this morning. I am thankful for this experience, and I am thankful for the opportunity to worship with you people.

I have thought a lot about what our sister Colleen said a few weeks ago concerning our speakers being better trained, and I know in my own case, I wish I knew more, and I know that I need to study more. Debbie rides to work with another teacher from her school, and recently this other teacher asked Debbie about our church and about what we believe. It has made both Debbie and me realize that we need to know more about what we believe and what this church is all about. We need to be able to share our beliefs with those around us because we never know when we will receive that opportunity.

When I used to teach Sunday School classes, it was sometimes hard to find materials to teach about the Book of Mormon and the Restoration movement. There might have been materials, but they weren't simple enough for me to use. I have wondered about, with the talent and the resources of this congregation, do we have materials for that in printed form? We have had some wonderful Sunday School classes. Do we have that bound so that we can continue to study that? I'm just asking. I don't know.

I have really enjoyed Mildred's books, *The Master's Touch* and *The Master's Touch Two*. Those have meant a lot to me. It used to be that we had a lot of books like that. I know when I was growing up, I used to enjoy reading those testimonies. It did something to me. It brought me closer to God. I wondered if it would be possible if we could print the testimonies from this congregation that we have had, and make up our own daily devotionals. I just wonder.

"You know, I also understand this morning that without the blessing of the Holy Spirit, what I say won't have much meaning. Sometimes I think this is hard for us to understand. And I think we need to understand that when we are studying, we still need the Holy Spirit with us, and that when we go to witness to others, we have to have our own personal testimonies of the influence of the Holy Spirit on our lives. It doesn't matter how much we know. If we don't have that personal testimony, it really doesn't mean much. This morning I hope that we may be able to give praise to our Heavenly Father for helping us to find a new testimony of the power of this Holy Spirit.

What will Zion Be Like?

As I have considered about what to say today, my thoughts have been centered around, "What will Zion be like?" I keep thinking about those words, "And there were no contentions and no disputations among them, and every man dealt justly one with another." Is that what Zion will be like? I remember hearing a story once that I would like to share with you.

A minister was preaching to his congregation and was talking to them about going to heaven and what they would need to be able to go to heaven. To emphasize the point, he asked the congregation, "If there was a bus out here that was going to heaven, how many of you would want to get on it? Raise your hand. "Everyone raised their hand except for one old guy sitting there in the back. The preacher thought, "He didn't hear me." So he said it a little louder and a little more forcefully, "How many of you want to go to heaven and get on the bus? If you want to, stand up." Everyone stood up except that one old guy in the back. It really puzzled the minister. He knew this was a good man, so he went back there and said, "Brother. Don't you want to go to heaven?" The old man looked at him and said, "Well of course, I want to go to heaven; but the way you were talking, I thought that bus was leaving right now!"

"If Jesus were to return to earth today, and He drove up here in a bus, and He was taking you up to Zion, would you want to get on it?" Now think about it before you decide. If we get on that bus this morning, we can't take anything else with us. We can't take our land. We can't take our cows. We can't take our tractors. We can't take any of our assets on that bus. We can't take any TV or VCRs or DVD players, and those little things that you listen to with the music coming down. You can't take your cell phones. You can't take your play stations. You can't take your computers. You can take your friends and your family if they are with you right now. But you can't take your collections. You can't take your toys. You can't take any diet Mountain Dew! Do you still want to get on that bus? What if I told you that there were others already on that bus? One of them is that neighbor that is just such a pain, always telling you things that you should be doing, yet he never takes care of his own business. How if that teacher is on there that you have had so much trouble with who is nice to your face then turns around and is not so nice to you when your back is turned? Do you still want to get on? What if your boss is on that bus - the boss that fired you from your last job? Do you want on? How about that person who wrote that letter to the editor about you, complaining about something that you did or complaining unfairly about how you do your job? Do you still want on? What if there is a Jay Hawk fan on that bus. Do you still want on there? Or maybe a member from some other church? Do you get the idea?

I have known people who seem to really enjoy agitating other people. And I have known other people who simply enjoy being agitated. Are there people in your life that you contend with? It

happens, doesn't it? It happens in our homes, in our families. It happens at work. And sometimes it even happens here. And sometimes the person who causes the contention is me. I don't even mean to, but sometimes I do. Sometimes I don't even think it's my fault. Each morning I try to remember to pray that I will think before I speak. Before we get on that bus, we have to have the love of God in our hearts so that we are of one heart and one mind.

This week I did a strange thing. I applied to return as a principal at the school I am at. And I guess the biggest surprise was that when I gave that letter of application to the superintendent, he had me come in for an interview that night. A lot of that interview process that I went through this week is a kind of a blur. But several of the interview questions dealt with the principal resolving conflict. One was an angry parent comes in. How do you deal with that parent? You have staff members that are not getting along. How do you deal with those staff members? You have Freshman girls who are writing things on the bathroom walls about each other. How do you deal with those students? You know, some people are just natural peace makers. I have observed that here. There are some of you that are just really good at taking the conflict away from other people.

This week one of my seniors that I have been really close to came to me in tears because she couldn't get along with her class mates. It has been a rough year for this young lady, and I don't know why, because she is a really good girl. Maybe that's a part of the problem. Sometimes she stands up too much for what she knows is right, and that doesn't always go well with her peers. But less than a week before the seniors will be going their separate ways, and instead of getting closer to gether and more united, more of one heart and one mind, having those fond memories that will last a life time, they are making each other unhappy. What should I have told Cathy to help dry her tears? What should I have said to her? Should I have told her that in God's Kingdom there will be no contention? We know that the time is getting near for Zion to return. That bus will soon be leaving. Are we coming closer together? Are we becoming more of one heart and one mind as we do God's will? Do we have the love that we need for each other that will help us to get on that bus?

(4 Nephi 1:11-14.) "And now behold it came to pass that the people of Nephi did wax strong, and did multiply exceeding fast, and became an exceeding fair and delightsome people. And they were married, and given in marriage, and were blessed according to the multitude of the promises which the Lord had made unto them. And they did not walk any more after the performances and ordinances of the Law of Moses, but they did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord and their God, continuing in fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft, both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord.

"And it came to pass that there was no contention among all the people, in all the land, but there were mighty miracles wrought among the disciples of Jesus."

When the board asked me in the interview what my greatest strength was, I responded to them right away that I care. I care for my students. I care for the people that I work with, and I care for my school. I don't know if they believed me for sure. Do my actions show that? I have been told that I have a very slim chance of getting this job again, but regardless of what I do next year, I hope that the people I am with can tell that I care about them. I hope that I can show them in the way that I speak and the way that I act. I need God's love in my heart so I can love others.

It seemed strange to interview before people that I knew. The

only other time I did that was when I applied in Lamoni. I knew a lot of those people. When you do that - when you interview in front of people that you have worked with for several years, you can't really hide anything. The other people that were there during the interview, I have their students in class, so they knew me pretty well, also. They know who I really am, and no words that I could say could really change that. When we try to get on that bus, Jesus knows what's in our hearts. He knows if we love each other. He knows if we have repented, and if we have really changed our ways. No words we can say can change that. Jesus will decide if we are on that bus.

I applied for the principal's job because I wanted a change in my life. I know I don't have many years left in education; and as a principal, I can affect a lot more students for a longer period of time than I can as a teacher. As a principal, every day is a new adventure. There is a lot more stress, and a lot more challenges; but challenges bring opportunities, and opportunities allow you to witness of God's love to others.

Reflections on Mother's Day

I haven't forgotten that this is Mother's Day. On the other side of town, in front of the church over there they have on their sign, and I don't know why we didn't say this first, "Mothers are the SOUL providers." I think that is very good, and I think that George agrees with me. In my own case, that was very true. My mother had a strong love for her heavenly Father and for those around her. She strongly reinforced in me the knowledge of right and wrong. A lot of what I did in my life, I did to please my mother, and I hope she is not disappointed. Mom often talked about and she looked forward to the coming of Zion. Mom's not on that bus, though. She's pretty busy right now. She's in heaven's nursery taking care of all the little ones. Later today she is going to go with God to see about all the new babies, humankind and animal kind. She is going to help Him count their numbers and call their names. Later on, she and Dad will be greeting people as they come through those pearly gates. And Dad's going to say, "I think I know you. Didn't you live up there north of Wishard Chapel?" And they are going to make people feel right at home. And we will be with them someday.

Like my Mom, I am very much Scotch-Irish, and you know our prayer. "Lord, make me be right because You know how hard it is for me to change." I need to make changes in my life, so that I can be a part of Zion. It's time to load the bus.

(4 Nephi 1:17-21) "And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people. And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God:" (Let me repeat that one.) "And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God... ." "There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of ites; but they were one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God; And how blessed were they, for the Lord did bless them in all their doings; yea, even they were blessed and prospered, until an hundred and ten years had passed away; and the first generation from Christ had passed away, and there was no contention in all the land."

Learn to Be Happy With God

Elder Norman Nelson read Micah 6 :6-8 for his opening scripture May 15. “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” He then asked, “Is anybody here who hasn’t been to school?” The two youngest, except for a baby, were in the third and 5th grades. He then asked, “What grade are any of us in the gospel school?”

“What would happen if you didn’t take your books or didn’t study anything in school, Matt?” You would fail. “What would happen to you in life if you didn’t go to school and learn? What kind of a job would you get?”

What I want to point out is that we are in school. We are in probation. We are learning what the Lord wants us to know. And the grades we are in depend on how much we have studied and how much we work to learn. If you refuse to learn, you don’t have much of a job with that, do you? The amount you learn determines what you can be taught. If you haven’t learned any of the lessons that the Lord has given you to learn, He can’t teach you anything. And the amount you can be taught depends on what you want to learn, how much you will try to learn and how far you have progressed in your learning pattern.

There are several of us here who have far advanced degrees in some tiny field. Some are in business, economics, some are in nutrition. Some are in veterinary medicine, doctors, etc. Those are very small fields. They don’t tell us a lot about what happens in other fields. The amount you are learning depends on what you have studied, what you have worked with, and what you want to be - what you want to learn. Your spiritual learning, your spiritual study continues to increase as you learn line upon line, precept upon precept. If you haven’t got the first line, you can’t learn the second. If we haven’t got the first precept, we can’t learn the second. You have to start at the bottom and learn as God will teach you.

Scriptures Teach Us How

Our scriptures tell us of what other men have learned about God. Some have learned a lot, and have been able to prophecy and tell us what is going to happen that God has shown them. But their prophecies are worthless unless you understand what they are saying. They are worthless to me unless I understand what the prophet is saying. If you have done a lot of study, and have a lot of understanding, have gained knowledge until you understand what the prophet is saying, then there is much meaning to that scripture. What I am telling you today only has meaning as you have experience and understanding for what I am saying. You must start at the bottom and learn from day to day if you want to know what others are saying.

I like this scripture in Zechariah 4:5-6. It has a lot of meaning for me, and I hope it has a lot of meaning for you. “Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, this is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbable

saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord” Dr. Nelson repeated. In our present day, a lot of us have wanted, just as the people back in Jesus’ day wanted God to show His power and His might. “Make these people recognize us. Aren’t we the chosen ones?” What are we chosen for? We are chosen to be the teachers - the ones that bring the word - the ones that are able to save others from the destruction that they face in this world in which we live. We are chosen to be teachers - not to have power or authority over anybody, but to be able to save them - to keep them from sinning and being separate from God.

Jesus Came to Teach Us How

So often, so very often, we worry about some little sin or some little thing that separates us from God, and what did Jesus say about this? “I came to save sinners. I came to bring sinners to God. When we worry about somebody being a sinful person, we need to remember, “This is My work and My glory to bring to pass the eternal life of man.” It is not to condemn them, but to teach them what they need to know. You can’t teach a person at the first grade level as if they were in college. You have got to teach them at the level they are. And if you throw them college degree material, they don’t understand. They have no knowledge and no way of understanding what you are talking about. So what is the message? Repent. Believe on Jesus Christ. Come unto Me. Be baptized and learn of Me.

Again, remember we are in a world that God has created. He made everything beautiful for us. He made a wonderful place for us to live. And just seeing this world is enough that you can learn a lot of the nature of God if you just look at it and enjoy it - how He loves you. He made you this wonderful place to live, to be happy, and He expects you and I to love each other enough to allow each other the privilege of enjoying the world He gave us. It’s not right for me to have all kinds of stuff and you not to have the stuff you need. Everything here God has given us, and it’s His - not mine - not yours. It’s God’s. It’s for us to share to make each other happy. And every time we begin to collect stuff and not share, we are damaging ourselves as much as we are damaging the other person who doesn’t have it. When I say, “This is mine”, and it is more than I need, I am neglecting to recognize the God who gave it. Zion is to be the people of one heart and one mind, with no poor among them - no rich and no poor - sharing faithfully with each other - just recognizing the fact that God is the author, the Father and the basis for all our lives. It is all His, and who do you belong to?

When you begin thinking of doing some of these other things, remember who you belong to. You are God’s. You are responsible to Him. You came from Him. You will return to Him.

We were asking the question this morning, What is the purpose of all this stuff? You are here so that you can learn line upon line, precept upon precept, so that you can learn to enjoy His presence. If you don’t learn, if you don’t study, if you don’t try to understand, you can’t enjoy being with Him. And if you chose just the carnal, sensual and devilish stuff that we have here for us, which you can, then you can’t enjoy being with God. You can only enjoy His presence if you try to learn to be with Him and be the kind of person who will enjoy being with Him. You need to enjoy your world today. That’s a part of Him. If you are not enjoying where you are now, you are not going to enjoy where you are going to be later. You are privileged to have the joy of enjoying the beauty, the wonder, the love of your God right now. This is why we are saying, when you get up in the morning, talk to your Father.

The other day I was in the hospital visiting, and there was an old preacher there who said, "Have you talked to my father today?" You know, it took me awhile. "Who is your Father?" Then I recognized what he was saying. "Have you talked to Jesus today?" Have you tried to learn anything from the Father? He doesn't make you learn anything. He doesn't make you buy the books. He doesn't make you study the books, but He asks you to do it. He said, "I came to teach you how to be the kind of person who can enjoy being with My God - that can enjoy being in the Kingdom of God." That's what He came for, and He knows that we are kind of wayward students. Just like some of the kids in school, you know they don't really want to learn what the teacher wants to teach them. We are all that way, and because He knew that we were that way, He made a plan that said, "It isn't all done. Because I know you need more experience, you need more things than you may be taught here, if you just try_ there are so many things that keep you from learning what you ought to learn - but if you will try and when you find that you have made a mistake, ask forgiveness - turn around and correct it - then I will stand between you and the error you made. I will forgive your sin, if you ask and repent."

Now repent means stop doing the bad thing you did and do something good in place of it. It doesn't mean keep going back and doing the same thing over again. It means stop what you did, ask forgiveness, confess that you did make a mistake, and try to do better. And if you will do that, I will take away that sin as if it didn't even happen. But you have got to repent, confess your sin and do better from now on.

Get Help For Your Study

Isaiah is a prophet of God. Notice I said is, not was. And he told us a lot of things that are going to happen in our day. But being the people we are, we frequently don't understand what he is talking about because he uses a language that we are not that familiar with; and so sometimes we need to study and think and take somebody else who has a master's degree in the study before we understand what he said.

"Woe!" That's a word of warning. You are in trouble. "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine!" It doesn't have much meaning in our language, does it? I was in Colorado and Rosy Gilbert was studying this, and she has written some things about Isaiah. She writes, "Woe is given to the prideful drunkards of Ephraim and those intoxicated with pride, self reliance and failure to depend on God. Ephraim refers to Gentile Christianity for the most part, but the first few verses are very descriptive of the early Restoration movement. We can also see ourselves in the light of today. The glorious meat of the gospel was given to the early church. The fat valleys refer to the spiritual abundance that has been ours but fast fading away. The Restoration literally had everything handed to it on a silver platter - a great abundance. The Restoration started out on a high note. There was an abundance of revelation. There was opportunity to establish Zion. There was a knowledge of that which was to come upon the earth. Mysteries were unfolded and revealed. The Book of Mormon came forth. Testimonies and revelation about covenant and the Kingdom of God was restored on earth and bestowed on the people." That's what she said about that first verse.

This is true. We were given so much and we look back in the Doctrine and Covenants and find that the church was condemned a couple of years after the church started because they took lightly the

revelations that had been given. The wonderful things that the Lord had placed before them to make possible, they didn't understand them. They didn't follow it. Didn't use it.

The study of Isaiah is a wonderful, wonderful work, but you need some help, and don't stop with just what you read alone until you have really studied and understand what the Lord was talking about. Like I said. It's a study. We are in a world where we are supposed to be learning, and we have to either learn or fail and be unable to enjoy the presence of our God.

Again, this is Alma talking in plainer language, I think. Anybody can understand this. "Yea, after having been such a highly favored people of the Lord; yea, after having been favored above every other nation, kindred, tongue or people; After having had all things made known unto them, according to their desires, and their faith, and prayers, of that which has been, and which is, and which is to come; Having been visited by the Spirit of God; having conversed with angels, and having been spoken unto by the voice of the Lord; And having the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and also many gifts; the gift of speaking with tongues, and the gift of preaching, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the gift of translation: ... Having been saved from famine, and from sickness, and all manner of diseases of every kind." Does that fit us? .., "having been waxed strong in battle, that they might not be destroyed; having been brought out of bondage time after time, and having been kept and preserved until now; and they have been prospered until they are rich in all manner of things.

"And now behold I say unto you, that if this people, who have received so many blessings from the hand of the Lord, should transgress, contrary to the light and knowledge which they do have; I say unto you, that if this be the case; that if they should fall into transgression, that it would be far more tolerable for the Lamanites than for them."

That's where we are today. We need to take seriously the work of learning to be with God - the work of learning to enjoy the world we live in - the work of learning to be the people that can establish the cause of Zion. We can't do Zion. That's God's work. Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord!

Further Counsel

After thanking Norman for his counsel, High Priest Robert Rolfe further advised, "If you will read the last six verses of the ninth chapter of Third Nephi, it tells you what is going to be coming upon this land. It's a kind of a sobering thing to think of because most of us think every day is going to be like the day before, but one day that won't be true."

(3 Nephi 9:101-106) "Yea, wo be unto the Gentiles, except they repent, for it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Father, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots, and I will cut off the cities of thy land and throw down all thy strongholds; And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thy hand, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers: Thy graven images I will also cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the works of thy hands; And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee; so will I destroy thy cities. And it shall come to pass that all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and priestcrafts and whoredoms, shall be done away. For it shall come to pass, saith the Father, that at that day, whosoever will not repent and come unto my beloved Son, them will I cut off from among my people, O house of Israel, and I will execute vengeance and fury upon them, even as upon the heathen, such as they have not heard."

A Judges View of The Book of Mormon -- More Than A National Treasure

High Priest Robert Rolfe, who is a judge, presented his view of the Book of Mormon in his sermon at Mt. Ayr on Sunday, May 23 by first commenting that while we had been talking about dust returning to dust while we discussed life after death, he wished to talk about dust in a little different sense. He then read Isaiah 29, 10-11, 17-18 and 27-31: "For, behold, the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep. For, behold, ye have closed your eyes, and ye have rejected the prophets, and your rulers; and the seers hath he covered because of your iniquities. And it shall come to pass, that the Lord God shall bring forth unto you the words of a book; and they shall be the words of them which have slumbered. And behold, the book shall be sealed; and in the book shall be a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world to the ending thereof.

"Wherefore, at that day when the book shall be delivered unto the man of whom I have spoken, the book shall be hid from the eyes of the world, that the eyes of none shall behold it, save it be that three witnesses shall behold it by the power of God, besides him to whom the book shall be delivered; and they shall testify to the truth of the book and the things therein. And there is none other which shall view it, save it be a few according to the will of God, to bear testimony of his word unto the children of men; for the Lord God hath said, that the words of the faithful should speak as it were from the dead.

"And woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord. And their works are in the dark; and they say, Who seeth us and who knoweth us? And they also say, Surely, your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay. But behold, I will show unto them, saith the Lord of hosts, that I know all their works. For, shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding? But behold, saith the Lord of hosts, I will show unto the children of men, that it is not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field; and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest. And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book; and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness; and the meek also shall increase, and their joy shall be in the Lord; and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. For, assuredly as the Lord liveth, they shall see that the terrible one is brought to naught, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off, and they that make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of naught." Michael Jordison sang of the freedom God gives with forgiveness. Our speaker commented, "It is interesting, the only way you can be free is to give everything in your life over to God. It doesn't seem that is possible, but that's the way it works." He then proceeded with his sermon.

Lynda and I saw a movie recently. I don't remember the name of the movie, but it was something about a national treasure. The

whole movie is about finding clues to find this big cache of treasure. It is kind of like you just follow the clues and you see the treasure at the end of it. Of course, the movie has a good ending. They do find the treasure. (I hope you have all seen it, because now you know the plot.) The interesting thing to us was that when we went with Alan and Valle to Washington, D. C., we were, in this movie, going to all the places we had just been to. It was just like we visited Washington, D.C. again - the Declaration of Independence and all of this. I remember this guy standing there with a gun on, standing next to the Declaration of Independence, and I said, "Don't you get tired of this?" And he said, "No. I love it. This is where I want to be." And I thought standing in the same spot for eight hours a day wouldn't be my idea of a good time.

As I thought about that, I recall that in Southeast Iowa a few years ago, there was a treasure story, and it sounded like what was just on the news. You know the young men who had said they found this treasure? Well, in this case they really did find a treasure. This church had bought this property, tore the house down and dug up the property to build a church; and when they did this, they found a big bunch of money. The heirs of the people who had owned that property sued saying, "We want that money. That's ours!" And the church said, "Finders keepers!" You have heard of that viewpoint, haven't you? "We found it, It's ours!" It was an interesting case, kind of like the one that was just on the news. Of course, you wouldn't believe that a church would want to keep something that wasn't theirs, would you?

I would like to tell you something: all of you who are hearing me right today, and those who are going to be reading this later, have a far greater treasure that is hidden, if you will, on your book shelves, your closets and drawers, etc.; and here it is - this book right here - the Book of Mormon. That's a far greater treasure, and I think that if you find it, and study it, you will find that there is a treasure there in a very real sense, not only for now but in the future.

What Does The Book of Mormon Claim to Be?

I have no doubt at all that the Book of Mormon is exactly what it claims to be. I know there are a lot of people who have trouble with that. Notice, I didn't say that the Book of Mormon is what some people claim that it is. I believe that the Book of Mormon is what it claims to be. We get into trouble when we make claims that are not even supportable by the Book of Mormon itself. Let me give you an example. I have heard this phrase - I might have even said it myself in years past - that the Book of Mormon is a history of the Indians that lived on this continent. Did you ever hear that? It is not supportable by the Book of Mormon. In fact, the Indians are not a single population or culture of people. There are great differences between them. All I can tell you is that if it was true, that the Book of Mormon is a history of the Indians that lived on this continent, then we would have an awfully short history of those people. We would have about a hundred pages in one book. One hundred pages is supposed to tell the history of all these people? It is just not the case, particularly when you consider that, from the Inuits up on the Arctic Circle clear down to South America, all the different indigenous people that live in those areas are Indians.

My belief is that the Holy Spirit will convince anyone who reads this book honestly and with the intent to decide if it is the truth, that it is exactly what it claims to be. And I just ask you this morning, "What does the Book of Mormon claim to be? How do you tell what it claims to be?" It really isn't that hard. Do you know why? Right in the front of the book, it tells you. So I am going to read the passage because it tells what this book claims to be; and you will

notice, if you read it, that it doesn't claim what we sometimes claim it to be. This says, and I am going to read it every word on the page:

"The Book of Mormon. An account written by the hand of Mormon upon plates taken from the plates of Nephi. Wherefore it is an abridgment of the record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites; written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile; written by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation. Written, and sealed up, and hid unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed; to come forth by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof; sealed by the hand of Moroni, and hid up unto the Lord, to come forth in due time by the way of Gentile; the interpretation thereof by the gift of God.

"An abridgment taken from the Book of Ether; also, which is a record of the people of Jared; who were scattered at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people, when they were building a tower to get to heaven; which is to show unto the remnant of the house of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off for ever; and also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations. And now if there are faults, they are the mistakes of men; Wherefore condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment seat of Christ."

You will notice that there are a lot of things that aren't said that we may have claimed the book to be. You notice that it is a record of the people of Nephi and the Lamanites, and it is directed to the house of Israel. It is a record of the people of Jared, written by commandment of God and written by the spirit of prophecy and revelation.

One of the things I do is serving as a judge in Leon, Iowa. My duty as a judge is to examine the evidence, and, based on the evidence, make a decision. That's a part of what I have to do. You might say, "How do you know who is telling the truth?" Sometimes it is hard. Sometimes it is not so hard. All I can say is there have been many criticisms claiming that Joseph Smith wrote this book. My view is that after reading this book for about fifty years, that it would be impossible for Joseph Smith, or anyone else in 1829 or any other year, to write the Book of Mormon. Now, that's a pretty definite statement. I am saying it is impossible, and I would like to talk about why I believe this book is exactly what it claims to be.

Old Criticisms Answered

One of the old criticisms is still floating around. It is said that Joseph Smith stole someone else's book. He didn't write it. He just stole it from somebody else. Two very common views - Lynda's uncle believed one of the two. One was that Ethan Smith's View of the Hebrews was the book that Joseph stole. That book is still around. It is not it! Her uncle believed it was Solomon Spaulding's book which was a fictional book written about 1812 on the Indians. A copy of that book has been found and it is in Oberlin College in Ohio. It is not it either! You can compare them, and it obviously is not Spaulding's book.

You might be interested to know that in an earlier edition of the New American Encyclopedia Dictionary, it said, in reference to the claim that Joseph Smith used the Urim and Thummim to translate the Book of Mormon, "On this, the Reverend Mr. Spaulding, a Presbyterian preacher, declares that having sometime before written a work of fiction which no publisher could be induced to print, his rejected copy had been lost or stolen and has reappeared as the angelically revealed Book of Mormon." Could this be true? Well,

when was the Book of Mormon first published? 1830. Correct! And according to the biography of Mr. Spaulding, written by a member of the historical society of Pennsylvania, a Mr. Devens, the Spaulding book was written about 1812, and Mr. Spaulding died in 1816, fourteen years before the Book of Mormon is published. So it is interesting that 14 years after his death, the Reverend is claiming that someone had stolen his book and published it as the Book of Mormon? You see how absurd the story gets if you actually examine the evidence!

Let me ask you this. Just as you look around, would you say on the average that our congregation is well educated? As a group, would you think that as far as the standard of today is concerned we are pretty well educated? I went through the list of our membership and noticed that more than half of our adult members have college degrees; many of them have professional or doctoral degrees. So, I am going to test for all of you educated people. Can you tell me what a mimetism is? How about a colophon? A metonymy? The point of this test is that we are claiming that in this day we have more knowledge and are better educated than any people who have ever existed. I might point out to you that there are over ten thousand of those things I just mentioned in the Book of Mormon. If you don't know what they are, how did Joseph Smith put them in there? How did he know about them when he had the equivalent of a third grade education? And he put literally thousands of these, which happen to be Hebrew figures of speech, in the book as plain as plain can be. How about enallages? There are over 800 of those in the Book of Mormon. And I just ask you, if you were to try these facts, wouldn't you say, "How would somebody put all of those in there when you didn't even know that there were such things until the last hundred years of study?" The Jews, or the Hebrews, may have always known what they were, but the rest of us surely didn't know what they were. It has been only during the last century that we have learned about Hebraisms.

Can any one of you define strophe? There are scholars studying the literary composition of Isaiah who have found quote, unquote, "poems" in Isaiah. They aren't poems like we have. We have poems that follow rhyme and meter. For example, "The rain in Spain goes mainly on the plain". The poems in Hebrew begin with words such as "Thus saith the Lord", "Behold", "Hearken", "Hear", "Who", and they end commonly with judgments, parallel climactic series of statements, quotations and questions. There are many, many of these in the Bible, and Bible scholars have located a lot of them and have sometimes referred to them as a stanza.

If you look at the way Ray Treat wrote the Restoration Edition of the Book of Mormon, he tried to write it in that poetic fashion rather than just in English. There are also many, many of those strophes, (which is Hebrew poetry), in the Book of Mormon. How would Joseph Smith have done this if he actually wrote the book? What about anachronisms? You know what an anachronism is? One of my heroes was Roy Rogers, King of the West! I remember one of the old time westerns. They are going across the prairie, and they are out of water. And I looked in the background, and you see this jet flying across the horizon. That's an anachronism, just as if Roy Rogers pulled a laptop computer out of his saddle bag. Anachronisms are things that don't exist in that age. If Joseph Smith really was going to try to do something hard, historical fiction is one of the hardest things to do because all of these anachronisms creep in. There are so many ways that you can mess up that if someone finds them, it is obvious the material was written at a later time. In court, we sometimes have people that do the same thing. They

don't get their facts straight because they are trying to pass something off that isn't true. There is a rule on this. If you are going to write historical fiction, keep it short! Did Joseph keep it short? No! Seven hundred and some pages! He violated the first rule. All I can say is, there have been a lot of people who claim that anachronisms existed in the Book of Mormon which were later proven to not be mistakes at all, and that Joseph actually was right when he included them.

What about writing on metal plates? Just recently the news reported that archaeologists had found a metal plate book that came from what I call the Sumerian people. There were actually things written on metal plates, bound in a book put together with rings. The book was dated, by the way, before Isaiah was written.

What about iron, steel and machinery? Did they have iron, steel and machinery? There are some people who said they carved all of those pyramids using stone tools and hauled all of the stone there by hand and put it up. Well, in 1951 there was an archaeologist who discovered they did have iron and tools! What's the problem with iron laying around outside? It tends to disappear rather quickly unless you store it without oxygen and water.

What about sunken cities? Also, about the same time they found cities under the water. How about glass, and the wheel? That's my favorite. They say they didn't have the wheel in the Book of Mormon times, and yet you go to the Museum in Mexico City and here is this toy they found in one of those pyramids that has a little horse like kids would play with, with wheels on it. One fellow, when asked about that would say, "Well, yeah, they put wheels on the children's toys, but they didn't use wheels for themselves." I find that incredulous that you could believe that you would use wheels on toys but you wouldn't figure out that wheels would be very beneficial on other things, too.

On the other hand, what are some things that you might expect Joseph would say concerning where he lived if Joseph was writing this book in Vermont? One of the things that is striking to me is that these aren't any cold words in the Book of Mormon. (There is one word speaking of snow, written by Nephi who would have known what snow was.) Now you might think about that. If you were living in Vermont, and you were writing this, wouldn't it be easy to write something that had to do with cold weather without even thinking about it? In fact, it is the other way around. Let me just ask you this. If you have read the Book of Mormon, how many times did you find that the Lamanites fought naked? Lots of times. You might say that they were just tough, but I can't believe anybody is going to be out fighting naked if it is cold! I just don't think that's going to happen! The omission of these references to life as it is lived, is an issue with historical forgery, that would really make it difficult to believe that it was possible that a farm boy with an elementary education could be able to produce such a book.

Now, how about some really difficult things that come out of this. Most of you have heard about the Dead Sea Scrolls. One of the things that was found in those Dead Sea Scrolls was a book of Isaiah that was a thousand years younger - by that I mean it went back closer to when Isaiah was actually written than anything we had had before. One of the criticisms of Joseph was that he quoted the Bible a lot. Another one was that he couldn't even quote it straight. Anybody who has read the Book of Mormon and noticed where the Bible is being quoted, there are many places where it is not the same. In fact, out of the four hundred and thirty or so verses that quote Isaiah in the Book of Mormon, more than half of those are not quoted as we find them in our Bible. Is it just a coincidence that the

Book of Mormon now compares with the modern translations of Isaiah that have been done since they found the Dead Sea Scrolls, and started interpreting those? And so the latest Isaiahs that are coming out agree with the Book of Mormon instead of those that are found in the King James version. Now, how could Joseph Smith do that? To me, that kind of evidence is really overwhelming.

The Testimony of the Three Witnesses

How about the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon? Do you remember who they were? Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer. They all signed a statement that is in the Book of Mormon. In case you haven't read that recently, I am going to read that to you. It's not that long. It says, "The testimony of three witnesses. Be it known unto all nations, kindred, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come, that we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record, which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, their brethren, and also of the people of Jared, who came from the tower of which hath been spoken; and we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety, that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates; and they have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true; and it is marvelous in our eyes, nevertheless, the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things. And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgment seat of Christ, and shall dwell with him eternally in the heavens. And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen. Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, Martin Harris." OK?

That's a pretty clear and concise statement of what they were claiming they were doing. I might ask you this. Why would someone sign a document like that? What are the usual reasons? What is it going to get me? Money. Maybe they thought the thing was going to sell a billion copies and they would cash in. Maybe they were duped. You know, maybe Joseph was a real con artist, and he got them to sign the affidavit and they didn't really understand what they were getting into. Maybe they thought they were going to be famous and be really powerful because of their association with this book. To me, it is more likely that what they said was actually the truth.

Well, I might ask you this, and you don't have to take my word for it, did any of these three witnesses ever withdrew their testimony to the Book of Mormon? All of the three witnesses were booted out, kicked out, pushed out, disfellowed, you know, from the organization; yet none of these in their lifetime ever recanted their testimony which appears in the front of every Book of Mormon. In fact, Joseph Smith, in Doctrine and Covenants 3:1 says that Martin Harris was an evil man! Now, let me ask you this, if you were involved in a fraud or something that wasn't true, and the guy that is perpetuating this upon the world tells them that you are an evil man and puts it in writing, wouldn't you say, "This has all been a lie! We trumped this up." I would surely think so. It's get-even, "Big -time," if that

was happening.

How many of you have seen the tomb stone at David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery's grave, or even a picture of it? What's on that stone? Right on their tombstone has been carved the testimony that what they said is true. Does that tell you that they believed it? It sure looks like it to me. I ask you, why would three people go through what these three went through? Did they have it easy after that? No, they didn't. They suffered a lot because of this. In fact, the Book of Mormon was known about before Joseph Smith got the plates out of the ground and published it. There was talk about it. It was called a Golden Bible; and they would have known what kind of opposition they were going to be facing. This was not a surprise. And beaten, tarred and feathered, thrown in jail, sued, charged with fraud, on and on, you would ask, why would anybody claim that this is true if it was not true.

The Testimony of This Judge

And now, I will tell you my own testimony about the book. If you were going to write a book that was false, why would you put the words that are found in Moroni 10:5-6 where it says, if you ask God if this is true, believing with sincere hearts, God will tell you. Now, would you put that in there? "Just ask God. Just go ahead. He will tell you!" Either you have got to be a complete lunatic, or it has to be true.

Now, I might tell you this also - you probably knew this - that teenagers do silly things. I say that only from a past distant memory that that's the case. I remember Bill Cosby said that when a kid becomes a teenager, somebody takes their brain out and they don't get it back until later. At least, that happened with me. That was a period in my life in which I engaged in some of the more serious evil things that I have done; but I also had some of the most wonderful experiences with the glory of God. I am going to make a confession here, right from the pulpit, of one of the silly, most naive things I ever did. Are you ready to hear this? You know confession is good for the soul.

What I decided to do was - I thought when I was about fourteen, I said, "I believe in the Bible and the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants." I decided I was going to read them! How many of you at fourteen have said things like that that you were going to do and you didn't do? Pretty easy, isn't it? "I'll do that right away, Mom." "The check's in the mail." Things like this. Well, I knew what I was like and so when I said to myself, "I am going to make this covenant with you to read these books." I said, "I am going to start with the Bible." Why, I don't know when it is the biggest of the three. I decided I would read enough so I could turn one page every day. That doesn't seem like much until you come home so tired that you can hardly keep your eyes open and you have got to read enough to turn that page. But I got it done. I read through the Bible. It took me a long time. I skipped the genealogies, I confess. Then I read the Book of Mormon. That took me about six months. And then I read the Doctrine and Covenants. That took me about two weeks. I was speeding up as I went along.

All I can tell you is that I read the promise in Moroni and I asked God if the book was true. Just exactly what Moroni said would happen, happened. And so, I am telling you that if you decide to do something like this, (study these three books), it will change your life. Some of the adults in your life will also tell you that they believe these books are scriptures, but if you will notice, they don't read them very much and if you look for their favorite book, it's the catalogue on the table rather than the scriptures in the closet.

If you want to have an experience with God, start reading those

books every single day, and you will experience God in a way that you cannot imagine. Doctrine and Covenants 83:8 we remember because it talks about the church being under condemnation. Do you remember why it is under condemnation? Because they took these things lightly, and the thing they took lightly was this book, the Book of Mormon. In other words, it was not serious enough just to be reading on a regular basis. In the book of Proverbs it says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Do you feel like we have vision today as a church?

Hosea, (I always like these "unknown" prophets), "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." If there is anything that is destroying the Restoration, it is because, as a group, we generally are ignorant of what is in these scriptures. My prayer this morning is that each of you will rediscover the treasure that you have in your closet, your bedrooms, your drawers, and find out that the Book of Mormon really is more than a national treasure worthy of discovery.

From the Pastor's Desk

Continued from front page to be wise, they became fools". The Apostle then lists over 30 sins resulting from their foolish views. (See verses 23-32) The Apostle's words sounds like a description of America to me. Do you see America rising or declining? What can we expect to happen to our liberties, if we are declining?

15
16
17
18

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

News and Notes

Dan Martwick Home From Italy

Dan Martwick, who is serving in the armed services in Italy, will be home briefly from June 13. While at home he plans to be married and to return to Italy, with his bride, to resume his service. The wedding is to be held at the Heritage Church in Creston's McKinley Park at 2 P.M. on Saturday, June 18, with the reception following at the Christian church on Townline Street, also in Creston.

Youth in Recital

Because of the time and location of Cessaries Galusha's piano recital at the University of Missouri Conservatory of Music, it was hard for most of the congregation to attend. Cessaries performed a second recital just for the local home folk on Saturday, May 14, at the Lamoni Community of Christ church. Jazmyn Galusha performed in a recital at Lamoni on May 1.

Anan Smith gave his junior recital of opera music in Shaw Auditorium at Graceland University on May 7. Approximately 100 people attended.

Aquilla and Jazmyn Galusha and Isabel Jordison participated in a ballet performance at Graceland's Shaw Auditorium on May 21.

Jared Beck, Outstanding High School Graduate

Jared Beck received the American Choral Directors Association award as the top senior choir student of the Mount Ayr Community High School choir this year. The Ringgold Singers present the award each year. It was one of 12 awards, scholarships and honors Jared received at the recent Mount Ayr Community High School's annual senior awards day. His achievements included being one of the top 10 in his class, a variety of scholarships, including Graceland University's assorted grants and scholarships and a matching grant awarded by Graceland and the Mount Ayr Restoration Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ. He received a fourth year academic letter, a Presidential Educational Excellence award denoting a grade point of 3.66 or better and an 85 percentile

ACT, recognition for the best solo performance by a male in the fall musical and letters in drama and speech. Congratulations, Jared!

Melissa Winkler, Outstanding University Graduate

Melissa Winkler graduated with highest distinction in accounting from the University of Iowa, Iowa City. She was in the top 2 percent of the graduating class and was honored as an accounting faculty scholar. She was the recipient of the outstanding senior award and was honored at a banquet given by the State of Iowa Certified Accountants Association as well.

Melissa Winkler's wedding June 11

Wedding for Melissa Winkler and Aaron Ballantyne will be held in Independence, MO on Saturday, June 11. The congregation had a shower for the couple recently.

Mission to Liberia

Seventy Ronald Smith, his wife Di, Pat Bolingbroke, all of Lamoni and members of the Mount Ayr congregation, Jeanette Thomas, wife of Seventy George Thomas, of Sibley, Missouri, and Seventy Neill Simmons of Independence all embarked on their teaching mission to Liberia Tuesday, May 31.

Elder Randy Vick, a member of the United Nations peace keeping team serving in Liberia, requested the service and made the Liberian arrangements for their mission. They expect to return in time for the Family Missionary Reunion in June.

Missionary Family Reunion Imminent

The Seventy Missionary Family Reunion will be held at Graceland University in Lamoni June 19-25.

We ask your prayerful preparation for the activities of the week. We encourage everyone to come and share in the events of the week.