

## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

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### Walking in the Image of Our Own God

The prophet Joseph Smith said a time would come when every man "...walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own God..." (DC 1:3(e)) Often this scripture is used to talk about those whose gods are idols of materialism or some other 'ism'. Those who are included in this group are often thought to be the "unbelievers". I wonder if this scripture isn't referring to those that believe they are christian, but have wrested the scriptures to justify their walk in strange paths.

There are churches that build their entire theology on one or a few verses and ignore the rest of their Bible. Henry Schaeffer often told me that if you believed your entire Bible you would be a member of his church. Lets talk about examples. Some believe that we are saved by grace (alone); some by faith (alone) (Acts 15:11; Eph 2:8; Luke 7:50) If I read those scriptures, I believe I am saved by grace. I am saved by faith. The problem is that the word "alone" is added to the scripture. If those scriptures are true, to the exclusion of other scriptures, what do we do with Rom. 5:10, we are saved by his life; or Rom 8:21, we are saved by hope. Which is it? Is it grace, or hope, or his life, or faith? How can it be only one of these alone, without regard to the rest of the Bible? Scriptures are wrested by adding a word that isn't there, just as they are wrested by deleting a word that is there. DC 3:15d says that Satan stirs the hearts of the people to contention regarding the

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## TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

### Who Is The Comforter?

"I would like to share a scripture with you this morning to begin with, from the 14th chapter of John," Elder Alan Smith said in his communion talk July 3. "We are going to be talking about the Comforter, the Holy Spirit in a special way. And I hope that maybe there will be some new ideas that come to you as they came to me as I studied these scriptures that tell about the Comforter and what it means to us."

"This was Jesus, as He was talking with His disciples, as recorded in John, which is the only one of the Gospels that uses the term, the Comforter. In fact, I think I will be sharing with you that, again, like so many times, the Bible gives us some things, the Inspired Version helps us a little more, but the other Restoration scriptures help us understand what the Comforter is much more than if we just have the King James, or any of the other versions, of the Bible." (John 14:15-29). Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

"I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."

And Judas, not the Iscariot asked the question, "How are we going to see you when other people don't?" "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings; and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world

giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father; for my Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe."

This is the first time that Jesus talks about the Comforter. He is getting close to the end of His ministry. He is telling the people that He is going to leave them; and He is talking about His Spirit which will come in power to be with them and guide them after He leaves.

We are here this morning to share in the Lord's Supper and to share in the promise that that Comforter, that Holy Spirit, can dwell in us daily, hourly, every minute. And thus it may be important that we understand just what that might be. The information I am sharing this morning from some of the study I have been doing recently - I have such a bad memory that I never know for sure if this is something that I just discovered, or maybe it is something someone gave me in a sermon a long time ago and I just found it again and it is all coming back. I did that one time with a sermon where I went and studied the scriptures all myself and then found it hadn't been but a couple of years earlier that I had heard the same sermon. It seems to me that it is a new revelation to me at this moment anyway; so whether someone else has had the same revelation, that is fine, too.

### Definitions

When we hear the word, Comforter, we can think of many things. Sometimes that brings to mind a fluffy quilt or something that we can wrap up in and feel snug and safe and warm. Or, when I was looking up some of the definitions, one says that there is a neck scarf that is called a comforter, but I had never heard that. That must be an older form of that idea or that word.

There are other definitions about someone who would bring strength and hope or freedom from grief and sorrow - consolation or solace. The scripture definition, though, if you go back and look at the word that is translated Comforter out of the Greek, is "one called alongside to help." So it is not just something that makes us snug and warm and comfortable like a quilt, but it is actually someone who is called along side - someone that stands with us to help us through what is going on in our lives. In fact, the same word is translated as Advocate. If you remember in First John 2:1 it says, "If a man sin and repent, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." That word advocate is the same translation as the Comforter - someone who will stand with us and guide us and help us.

For much of the Christian world, the only scriptures about the Comforter are those recorded in John. John provides some good understanding of the Comforter. He says it is the promise that if we love Jesus and keep His commandments, He will give us a portion of His Spirit beyond that which is given to everyone as they come into the world -- the Spirit of Truth which those who don't know the Father cannot receive, the scripture tells us. Jesus promises that the day will come after His death when His disciples, will have a special relationship with God that Jesus had in the flesh -- the same relationship. Jesus says here in chapter 16 of John, "I will pray the Father and ask Him to send the Comforter". In chapter 17 of John, we have the prayers where He is praying and asking for that relationship to come that "they will know You as I know You and will be in each other", and all these kinds of things. "That they all may be one as Thou, Father art in Me and I in Thee that they may

also be one in Us that the world may believe that You have sent Me."

### A New Relationship

Jesus tells them, "You will know that I am in the Father - You are in Me, I am in you", - a relationship that was beyond what they could have had while Jesus was still in the flesh. Later on in John He says (John 16:7) "The Comforter can't come until I am gone."

I have wondered about what that meant. But when you stop and think about it, Jesus is saying that Spirit that is going to come to be with you, I am going to be in you; and the reason He could not do it right then was that Jesus was still in time. There was going to be a time very quickly when He was going to step back out of time again so He could be in each one of us, wherever we are and in whatever time. Whereas when He was here He could minister to them face to face; but for that Comforter, that Spirit which involves the Father and the Son, to be with us at all times, to be able to share with us in that way He needed to be back out of time .

Jesus said the Comforter would teach the disciples and bring back to their remembrance everything that He had said to them. What does that say to the critics that say that the Gospels were written thirty years after the things actually happened, so how could anybody remember what went on? I guess they must not believe the promise of what Jesus prayed for them and said, that He would give them a Comforter just for that purpose - to bring back to remembrance all of things that He had taught them while He was here. Jesus goes on to say that He leaves them in peace, not the world's peace, but freedom from fear. "Let not your heart be troubled." Don't be afraid! And then He says, "I told you these things, and I am going to have them called back to your remembrance." Why? "I told them to you before they come to pass so when they do come to pass, you might believe."

Jesus then talked about our day - the last days. Do you think that same promise is to us? "I told you these things so that when they come to pass, you don't have to be afraid, and you can believe that I was the one who said them, and believe in Me and the power that I have."

The other two passages in John that talk about the Comforter say that the Comforter will come from the Father and testify of Jesus. And, as I mentioned before, the Comforter cannot come unless Jesus leaves. It also says that the Comforter will also administer rebuke to the world because they don't believe in Jesus and have judged Him unrighteously.

### Restoration Scriptures Give Further Light

All that is important information and helpful to us as we try to understand the Comforter and its power that comes into our lives. But the Restoration scriptures give us more information - more background. In Genesis 6, where Enoch is telling us how Adam was taught the Gospel from the beginning, is the first place that talks about the Comforter. It says this (Genesis 6:62-65): "Even so ye must be born again, into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye may be sanctified from all sin; and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come; even immortal glory. For, by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified; and by the blood ye are sanctified. Therefore it is given to abide in you, the record of heaven, the Comforter, the peaceable things of immortal glory, the truth of all things, that which quickeneth all things which maketh alive all things, that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice and judgment. And now, behold, I say unto you, This is the plan of salvation unto all men,

through the blood of mine Only Begotten, who shall come in the meridian of time.”

We have some more definition of what the Comforter is. This is the “record of Heaven”, the thing that keeps track, I guess, of “The peaceable things of immortal glory. The truth of all things.” The Comforter is that which “quickeneth all things” and makes them alive. The Comforter is that which “knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice and judgment” in the world. When that Comforter is with us - when we are sharing in that Spirit, who would we rather have standing beside us, helping us - being a part of us - working with us?

There is only one mention of the Comforter in the Book of Mormon. Moroni 8:29 says, “... . And because of meekness and lowliness of heart,” which comes from baptism and fulfilling the commandments and remission of sin, “cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God.”

Jesus told us earlier that the Comforter would bring us His Peace, the peace that casteth out all fear. Here it talks about it filling us with hope and perfect love. Of course, what do we know about what perfect love does for our lives? “Perfect love casteth out fear!” Another way of saying it, one time Jesus talked about the Comforter bringing us peace, helping us not to be afraid. Another time he tells us it brings us that perfect love which casts out fear. That’s where we find the perfect love in our lives. It is if we let the Comforter dwell with us and be a part of our lives.

Most of the scriptures about the Comforter are in the Doctrine and Covenants. There is one special one, which I will get to last - the one that got me started on all this altogether. I just want to run through some of the characteristics and how it works in our lives that are also mentioned in the Doctrine and Covenants. Section 23, verse three: given to Oliver and Joseph is the promise that they can continue calling on God in Christ’s name, writing things given to them by the Comforter, expounding all the scriptures to the church. They had the promise that it would be given to them in the very moment what they should speak and write. So, if the Comforter had led them in the things they were writing and doing as they were working on the translations, it would continue to help them and bring to their remembrance the things that they needed to know when they needed to know them.

It is the promise that the Comforter will give specific directions on where to go and what to do for the Lord. That is in section 30 of the Doctrine and Covenants. In Section 35, when Edward Partridge was being ordained, there was the promise given that he would receive the Comforter which would help him learn the peaceable things of the Kingdom.

In Section 42 of the Doctrine and Covenants it talks about the Comforter knowing all things and bearing record of the Father and the Son to all those who receive it.

In Section 50 of the Doctrine and Covenants it says that the Comforter is sent forth to teach truth to people - that ministers are ordained and sent forth to preach the word of truth by the Comforter in the Spirit of truth; and the relationship is that unless both the speaker and those who are listening have the Comforter, the truth doesn’t get through. - it doesn’t make a difference for us. So both those who are speaking and those who come to listen, need to search for that Comforter to be a part of our lives so that we can understand - we can communicate - we can hear the truth, and it will make a difference in our lives.

Section 52 of the Doctrine and Covenants says that ministers are to preach none other than that which is written in the scriptures and that which has been taught to them by the Comforter through the prayer of faith. It is telling us about where we need to look for our direction or ministry.

Section 75 of the Doctrine and Covenants says that as ministers move out, calling on the name of the Lord for the Comforter which will teach them all things that are expedient for them, praying always that they not faint ... . They should ask, knock and seek and it shall be opened unto you and made known from on high, even by the Comforter, where they should go. So as they went out into the mission field, the promise was that the Comforter would lead them to where they should go and help them know what they should say and what they should do.

Section 78 of the Doctrine and Covenants again reiterates that the Comforter will teach truth and the way we should go in our lives. Section 87 of the Doctrine and Covenants, in 3d and 4 says: “. . . and then cometh the day when the arm of the Lord shall be revealed in power in convincing the nations, the heathen nations, the house of Joseph, of the gospel of their salvation. For it shall come to pass in that day, that every man shall hear the fullness of the gospel in his own tongue, and in his own language, through those who are ordained unto this power, by the administration of the Comforter, shed forth upon them, for the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Does that sound like the Comforter, if this is the time we think it is when word is being preached around the world, is this the time when we need the power of the Comforter to be leading us? It is only through that - only when the Gospel is preached with the power of the Comforter that it is going to make a difference.

In section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants, in a portion given to William Law as he is being sent out, it says, “If you will humble yourself and be without guile, you shall receive the Spirit, even the Comforter which will manifest unto you the truth of all things, and give you what you should say and power to heal the sick and cast out devils.” It shall deliver him from poisons and lift his thoughts up like eagles wings in inspiration. He will even be able, by that power, to raise the dead if the Lord calls and wills that he should do it. The power that is to go with him in his ministry comes from his relationship as the Comforter works with him that Christ and God can dwell in him through that Comforter.

And then there is the section of the Doctrine and Covenants that got me started on all this - section 85 as it talks about the Comforter. I used some of this in call to worships a couple of times in the last year or so. I wonder if anybody else picked up on some of the things that I saw. This is section 85 1c and we go on through 4. “Wherefore I now send upon you another Comforter, even upon you, my friends, that it may abide in your hearts, even the Holy Spirit of promise, which other Comforter is the same that I promised unto my disciples, as is recorded in the testimony of John.” (He is referring back to the sixteenth chapter of John.) “This Comforter is the promise which I give unto you of eternal life, even the glory of the celestial kingdom; which glory is that of the church of the Firstborn, even of God, the holiest of all, through Jesus Christ, his Son; he that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth, which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ.” The Comforter is the light of Christ! Standing beside us is the promise of eternal life, and understanding and having the light of Christ with us. If, when we have the Comforter, we have the light of Christ, is there any wonder that in the experiences such as when



the children are blessed in the Book of Mormon, Kirtland Temple's dedication, the baptism in the dark in Michigan with J.J. Cornish, that the light of Christ was physically seen?

He goes on to talk about the light of Christ, "As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made. And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. And the light which now shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God, to fill the immensity of space. The light which is in all things; which giveth life to all things;" (Remember we talked earlier about the Comforter as that which giveth life to all things.) "which is the law by which all things are governed; even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things."

That's the kind of power that Jesus prayed for in the seventeenth chapter of John when He said, "I want this power to be in you, so that you are one with the Father and one with Me, just as the Father and I are one. I want this power to be with you that enlightens your mind, that quickens your understanding, that leads you and guides you, that will stand with you in all things that you say and do. And it's the promise of eternal life - not just eternal life. It's the promise of Celestial glory if we can receive that - if we can open our lives and accept the gift of the Comforter which Jesus prayed for us - each one of us. As He said, He prayed not only for His disciples at the time he was praying but for everyone who would believe on their words down through time - everyone who would recognize from the things that the prophets and the people wrote as the revelation of God came to them, that we should know of a surety who He was, and that we would not have to be afraid of anything. The Comforter, then, is more than just a quilt we need to wrap up with to feel warm and snug and cozy - much more! It's a Presence to stand with us and help us - to enlighten our minds - to teach us all things - to lighten our way literally at times - to help us know the pure love of Christ which casts out fear and brings us peace. It's the method by which we become one with God and Jesus Christ, and they dwell with us now and eternally.

#### **Why, Then, Are We Here?**

Is this something that you would like to have in your life? That's why we are here this morning - to come to the table and say, "Forgive me, Lord, for where I am in my life. I see with new eyes where you want me to be. I'm ready to try to go be there. I remember Your sacrifice. I remember what You have done for me. Here I am. I would like to receive that Comforter in a greater degree, so that I recognize that it's teaching me and leading me, making me bold, unafraid."

My testimony this morning is that I need this in my life. There are times when, like the Disciples, I fall asleep, when Jesus says, "Can you pray with me for just a little while?" There are times in my life when, like Peter, I say, "I am not sure I can tell people that I know You." I pray this morning that we will understand and receive that Comforter - that Presence with us - to stand beside us - to help us and lead us and guide us and give us light to a greater degree in our lives as we understand His blessings as we seek to become one with Jesus and His Father,

## **The Power Placed Within Us**

After welcoming those who were visiting as they await the opening of Mammoth Camp at Graceland University, Priest Gordon Winkler shared two scriptures, John 14:12, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." That was Jesus speaking. Then from the 58th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 6d, "Verily I say, Men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; for the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves."

I have entitled my speaking this morning, "The Power Placed Within Us", And as you may have gathered from those first scriptures we read, it would be indicated that we have all the power that Jesus had, maybe more if we would exhibit the faith that Jesus had. And also from the Doctrine and Covenants that we can know the truth of all things, and that we have that power within us. My message thought, then, this morning is that there is far greater power in us than we understand or that we exercise.

This past Wednesday night I was in charge of the prayer and testimony services at Gloria's house and I mentioned that I had been thinking on the word, Power, and the thought came to me as I happened to be sitting watching television and the commercial came on for promoting of a Dodge Ram truck. They were promoting the Hemi Vortech engine as being a powerful engine. The commercial described and demonstrated the truck engine's power in terms of its pulling capacity and its ability to haul, or its load capacity. I got to thinking, in the context of that commercial, power was defined as strength. And we often do define power in terms of strength. I remember watching the Olympics. They have the power lifters - and now they have both male and female power lifters. They pick the weight up - four hundred, five hundred pounds and are able to put it over their heads; and we look at that strength and consider those people to have power.

We refer to a lot of things in terms of horse power in terms of engine size. We refer to even drink now as powerade, and I would refer you to Mildred, because she can help you interpret what really is being advertised and promoted there. It is not necessarily power. I saw a picture the other day that had an elephant on it and it described the power of whatever it was they were advertising. I don't remember what they were advertising, but they had an elephant on it so we would think of strength and power.

Power can also be defined in other ways. We often think of power in terms of authority. Officials have authority and therefore power. Judges have authority and therefore power. The Priesthood has authority and therefore power. In this context, authority talks about power being needed for control and for order. Officials have order over the game. They have the rules and they enforce the penalties that need to be enforced in order to make the game play fairly. Judges have the obligation of the enforcement of laws and the interpretation of laws, and the sentencing of those who abuse the laws; so they have authority and power. The Priesthood has authority and power through the examples of ordination and baptism.

But also, power can be thought of in terms of position. In that regard, power is really leadership and it is decision making. We

would regard the President of the United States of America as a position with power. We would also, at least I do coming from Detroit, regard the head of the UAW as having power, because I have seen what unionization has done for Detroit in the automotive industry.

Power can also be expressed through mechanical systems. We just had an experience with that. Our youngest daughter, Heidi, called one day and said she was having difficulty with her car. It was squeaking when she turned and made a kind of funny noise and was getting hard to steer. The power steering unit had gone out, or was going out in her car. I don't know how many of you can remember back to when cars did not have power steering, but there is a significant mechanical advantage in power steering vs. non power steering.

We also recognize mechanical assistance in power tools. I have a brother. Every weekend we would have to take turns mowing the yard, and we didn't have a gasoline operated mower. It was the round, rotary push mower. Somehow we had determined that the back yard was bigger and more difficult to mow than the front yard. So there was always an argument as to who mowed the back yard last, because each of us wanted to mow the front yard. My Dad settled that problem for us. He simply said, "Every other weekend, one of you has to mow all of the yard". So that didn't work out the way we had hoped it might.

My Dad is eighty years old and for Melissa and Aaron's wedding, he made them a china hutch. At eighty years old, he could not have done that without the assistance of power. He could not have done that with a hand saw and a chisel. So mechanical assistance in terms of power really is the advantage gained from electricity or hydraulics, from water or from combustion.

The scriptures talk a lot about power. In fact, I did a word search and found that there are over twenty thousand times that the word, power, is used in the scriptures. So if you will just sit back and relax, I will start to read them all to you. Just kidding!

The scriptures use power in the context of strength, in the context of authority, in the context with position, and if you would include the natural power that you find in lightning, floods and winds, it talks about that type of power also. But many of the references are about the power of God working within His people, and that's the power that I want to focus on.

### **The Power in You - Are You Prepared to Use It?**

What power has been placed in you, and are you prepared to use it? I would like to begin by sharing from the sixth chapter of Genesis. So, very early in the scriptures, power is discussed. In this chapter of Genesis Enoch is recording what God had spoken to Adam. This is really a conversation that God had with Adam, but Enoch is recording it. God is telling Adam, Verse 59, "I have given unto you another law and commandment; wherefore teach it unto your children that all men must repent or they can in no wise inherit the kingdom of God." And He talks about man not being able to be unclean in His presence. And He talks about what needs to be done in the world in order to bring man back into His presence. In verse 63, He talks about, "For by water you keep the commandments; by the Spirit ye are justified; and by the blood ye are sanctified." So all this is in the conversation that has been recorded.

This is the part I want to get to in verse 64. "Therefore it is given to abide in you, the record of heaven, the Comforter, the peaceable things of immortal glory, the truth of all things, that which quickeneth all things which maketh alive all things, that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth,

justice and judgment." So God is telling Adam that because He has placed in him the Comforter, which Alan spoke about a couple of weeks ago, that Comforter gives him all the record of heaven and all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice and judgment. Then if you skip all the way down to verse 71, I think this is important the way the chapter ends. It ends by saying, "Behold, thou art one in me, a son of God;" talking about Adam. And then it says, "and thus may all become my sons." So we all have the opportunity to become God's sons just as Adam was considered to be God's son.

Years later Moroni finishes his account in the Book of Mormon with a similar writing. I have always enjoyed the tenth chapter of Moroni just because I think it is one of those cases where he has done a lot of recording and has written a lot of things and this is the last of what he can say. So I would think this is what is most upon his heart and most important for him to write. The chapter begins by saying, "Now I, Moroni, write somewhat as seems to me good;" and he is speaking at this point to the Lamanites, and he says in verse 5, "And if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost; and by the power of the Holy Ghost, ye may know the truth of all things." It goes on, "And whatsoever thing is good, is just and true; wherefore, nothing that is good denieth the Christ, but acknowledgeth that he is. And ye may know that he is, by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore I would exhort you, that ye deny not the power of God; for he worketh by power, according to the faith of the children of men, the same to-day and to-morrow, and for ever." So Moroni is acknowledging that we have the power to know the truth of all things. It was present in Moroni's time, so it is present in our time because God is the same today, tomorrow and forever.

You know, there is a song that we have heard played before many of the basketball games and sport events that we have gone to with our girls that is a kind of loud, raucous song, but it says, "I've got the power." That is what I would like to bring across to you this morning that you've got the power. The scriptures refer to power in so many things that I really would not be able to cover all that subject matter this morning, but I want to talk specifically about two or three areas - the power of prayer, the power of testimony and the power of proper priorities in our life.

There is a story of a Welch woman who lived in a remote valley in Wales. She went through a great deal of expense and a great deal of trouble to have electrical power installed in her home. After a couple of months the electric company noticed that she didn't seem to use very much electricity. Thinking that there might be a problem with the hook up, they sent out a meter reader to check on the matter. The man came to the door and said, "We have just checked your meter, and it doesn't seem that you are using much electricity. Is there a problem?" "Oh, no!" she said. "We are quite satisfied. We turn on the electric light every night just to see to light our lamps. The we switch it back off again."

Now, why didn't the woman make more use of her electricity? She believed in electricity. She believed the promise of the electric company when they told her about it, and she went to a great deal of expense and trouble to have her house wired so she could have electricity, but she only used it sparingly one time each night to see so she could light her lamps, then she would turn it back off. She really didn't understand the potential for electricity in her house; so she used the power sparingly. I suspect that there are people who pray very much the same way as this woman used electricity. They

believe in prayer. They know the promises God has made. They have even heard and read stories about answered prayers, but they use the power of prayer sparingly.

### **Why Do We Ignore the Power In Us?**

Why do we ignore the power God has placed within us? Maybe we believe it doesn't really matter whether we pray or not. God is going to do what God is going to do anyway, so why bother? Have you sensed that from some people? Do we treat prayer as a last resort? After all else has failed, I will pray. Have you sensed that among people? It is sort of like the "Hail Mary" pass in football. Those of you who are football fans will remember the Doug Falutie pass or maybe you remember where Colorado beat Michigan at the end of the game on a "Hail Mary" pass. You throw it up as far and as high as you can, and you hope that it reaches its desired destination.

We pray a little bit like that. We sometimes make an occasional appeal - just throw it up there; but in our hearts, do we really view prayer as making a big difference on a daily basis? You know, I have to confess there have been times in my life when I have prayed that way - times when I wondered, "Does it really matter, because God is going to do what He wants to do anyway? And when I have done all that I can, I throw up a prayer. You see, I am the administrator at the hospital, so I am used to being in charge. So I try to accomplish as much as I can get accomplished on my own. That always seems to be the way I approach things first. Then, sometimes when all else fails and I can't get it accomplished, I would offer a prayer. In those instances in my life, I really forfeited the power that God has placed within me. As you think back on your life, I hope those times in your life have been minimal. I would hope that you wouldn't have those times that you have been in those positions, but I suspect for some, you have been there.

Two people come to my mind that exemplify the power of prayer. I think about Daniel, and I think about Nephi. Daniel prayed three times a day. He prayed in his room. He prayed in the lion's den. He prayed for wisdom. He prayed for guidance, and he prayed that God would forgive the sins of his people, Israel and return them to their home. That record you can find in Daniel the tenth chapter. Actually, all through Daniel there is the record of Daniel praying, but I want to talk about the tenth chapter a little bit. Here it describes Daniel praying. In verse two of chapter ten it says, "In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled." Three whole weeks of praying! Some of us just went through a weekend of fasting and prayer, and I have to tell you that just the weekend without eating is tough for me to do. I have a little predisposition to hypoglycemia, and so I have to be careful that I at least get some sustenance, but I can't imagine going three weeks without eating or drinking and in continual prayer. Daniel did that.

Nephi prayed. He prayed a lot, too. He prayed to see his father's vision. He prayed for direction through the wilderness. He prayed about obtaining the plates of brass from Laban. And he prayed that they might obtain food when their bows were sprung and broke. Do you remember that story? And he prayed about crossing the great waters, and the Lord told him how to build a ship.

What about Jesus praying? Jesus prayed for forty days and forty nights. That's twice as long as Daniel prayed, and He fasted. He gave us a parable in Luke, 18:1-7. (Michael mentioned this just the other night.) It begins by saying, "And he spake a parable unto them, saying, that men ought always to pray and not faint." It is the

parable of the widow who came into the city and came before a judge. She kept asking and finally he says that he will grant her what she asks.

Skipping back to that tenth chapter of Daniel a minute, Daniel prayed, and in his prayer, he received the powers of heaven. An angel was sent to answer his prayer. He prayed, and he was given the power to overcome the forces of darkness at that time. You read the tenth to the twelfth verses there: "And, behold, a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands." Prior to that Daniel had been lying down on the ground. Now he is up on his hands and knees because he was touched. "And said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright; for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel; for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words." I thought that was very interesting, "from the first day that thou didst set thine heart." Remember, Daniel had been praying for twenty one days! Do you think he had begun to wonder if God is really listening? Is He really out there? But the angel said, "God heard you from the first day that you prayed." And he had sent the angel to answer his prayer and to give him power to overcome the darkness that he was facing. God will do the same for you. Remember, He is the same yesterday, today, tomorrow and forever!

The fifth chapter of James says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." So I believe that there is power in prayer, and that each of us has that power as we pray.

### **The Power of Testimonies**

I think the same about testimonies. I remember several testimonies that I thought were just exceptional in terms of power. One of those was one of Juan Reyes when he talked about his experience of not having a lunch and being granted one quail egg, I believe it was. How small and insignificant one quail egg would seem, but in his experience and his conversion, one egg was an answer to his prayer, and sharing that testimony strengthens us all.

I remember Ron Smith's testimony, and I have shared it a number of times with people, about being in Africa and being able to break the language barrier and not even know it! Ron's testimony is that he was speaking to a man, sharing the gospel and answering questions. And the man was answering back in this conversation. I don't remember, but somehow he was sharing this experience and somebody asked him, "How did you converse with him? He speaks no English and doesn't understand English." And of course, Ron doesn't understand Luo. What a testimony that is of God's ability and God's power that He placed in that position!

Just a couple of Sundays ago, Diane Anderson had the ministry of music, and she did much as the girls did this morning. (Cessaries Galusha had played the piano while Jazmyn recited a hymn concerning the Sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.) Diane had a tape playing in the background as she read about two minutes of testimonies through her life, including that of losing a child at a very young infant age, and experiences right up to this past Missionary reunion. Sharing our testimonies is incredibly powerful, and God has given each of us ability to share those kinds of experiences.

You know, when you think about it, mostly the scriptures are accounts of personal testimonies. They are not lectures. They are not necessarily formulas. They are really testimonies of those people who have had an experience with and a testimony of Jesus



Christ. - an experience with God -who have recorded those experiences and left those testimonies for us so that we can have the same experience that they have had.

### **Priorities Matter**

As I mentioned, we have been through a prayer and fasting weekend, and we prayed for those that know not God. We set that as a priority for this weekend, and I think that there is power in setting priorities. There is an old recipe for rabbit stew that starts out with this instruction. "First catch the rabbit." The author of the recipe knew how to put first things first. By putting first things first in our lives, we can find power through proper priorities. Have you ever thought what God will say to you about your priorities - the ones that are reflected in your life? Our priorities will be transparent to God. He will be able to see through our masks that we are wearing and the fronts that we put up. The truth of the matter is that we probably can't hide our priorities from each other either. Just ask a teacher. They know what their students' priorities are. The choices we make between two options reveal our priorities. Do I study for a test or do I play video games? Do I spend time at home with my family or do I go out every night after work with my buddies? Do I read my scriptures or do I just sit and watch television? I think you can probably add innumerable things to that list, but I think those exemplify separation between proper priorities and things that we sometimes place as a priority in our lives.

Paul teaches us in his writings in Romans about making wise choices based on God's priorities. In the sixth chapter, verse 16 he writes, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" Are the priorities in your life unto righteousness? Continuing then, on verse seventeen Paul writes, "But God be thanked, that ye are not the servants of sin, for ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." "Having obeyed from the heart". He didn't say that you have acknowledged the doctrine. He didn't say that you can recite the doctrine. He doesn't say that you are familiar with the doctrine. Paul said that ye have obeyed the doctrine from your heart - that form of doctrine being Jesus Christ! Where is that doctrine within you? Is it in your heart? Is it just something you acknowledge? Is it something you can recite? God can tell what your priorities are by the fruits of your life. You may profess good priorities, but are they reflective of what Christ would exhibit?

### **Will You Now Use the Power Placed In you?**

Paul wrote further in Philippians the fourth chapter, verse 8: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just; whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you." In essence, what Paul is saying is, "Practice what you have learned and heard and make them a model for your living. Use them to set your priorities and God will be with you.

If we are willing to obey from our hearts, we must have a teachable heart - to allow God to correct us in those areas where our ideals do not match our actions. God will not judge us by what we profess about our priorities or our intentions, but rather upon what we do. We tend to talk of what should be most important to us. We talk about, "I should lose some weight." "I should exercise more." "I should study more." And if we are saying those are the things we

should do - that those are the priorities that we currently are not doing - we need to be thinking how to bridge that gap.

Paul says to develop a life based on the doctrine of Jesus Christ as our priority, and we will receive the power of heaven - God's peace to be with us. An unfortunate characteristic of being human is that the vast majority of us will tend to go with the flow. Most people want to be normal. Any of you that have grown up really remember what it was like being odd - being different from everybody else. We all thought we wanted to be normal - that normal was good. Few people want to appear to oppose what the vast majority considers good. Most of us just want to fit in, and to feel a sense of acceptance. However, Paul writes (Romans 12:2-3), "And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is."

In the Old Testament, Ezekiel is asked by God to warn His people of the desolation to come upon the land. You will find that in Ezekiel 33: 31-32.. "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not."

Don't let this be your response. Let the doctrine of Jesus Christ have residence in your heart, and experience the power of proper priorities in your life. Believe there is power placed within you. Turn on the power in your life. Use the power that God has given you. Use the power that you can find in prayer and in testifying and in establishing proper priorities. In such a way you will be able to magnify your servanthood to God, and you will be able to assist in spreading His gospel and establishing His kingdom here on earth.

## **An Invitation - Come To Zion Singing**

High Priest Robert Rolfe addressed the congregation July 17 calling our attention to the 52nd chapter of Isaiah. "For those of you who are within the sound of my voice," he said, "some of you are privileged because you are going to see this happen." "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean."

Michael Jordison sang a song of faith asserting, "I will hold on to the hand of Christ, my Savior, and I will hold on with all of my might." Then Brother Rolfe continued.

Unfortunately, you don't have a remote out there to mute the message of today, so you are going to have to bear with me. What would you say if I would ask you, "Would you like to know what God is going to be doing today? Or tomorrow? Or next week?" Well, you can. I would like to direct your attention to Amos 3:7. There is a very important scripture there for those of us who believe in revelation that continues. It says, "Surely, the Lord God will do nothing until He revealeth the secret unto His servants the prophets." That's quite a statement, isn't it? He's not going to do anything until He tells His prophets first.

Well, for those of you that have ever tried to read through the prophets, you might say, "That's kind of tough to figure out what

they are all saying.” There are two reasons for that. One is, as Nephi says, the prophets wrote in the learning of the Jews, and the other is that we are mostly ignorant about what it says in the first five books of the Bible. If you don’t know the laws, it is hard to understand what the prophets are talking about.

### **Why Does God Prophecy?**

Why would God prophecy anyway? Why should He even bother prophesying? I just pose that question to you. Why would He even care if you or I know what is going on and what’s going to happen? And I would like to suggest to you, and you have probably heard this before, it is because God loves you! That’s why He prophecies - because He loves us a lot! He would like us to know what is going on. He wants us to know what is going to happen. He warns us about the path that we are on, if we are on the wrong path. Sometimes He wants us to increase our faith. He would like us to have a bigger faith and to be more reliant on Him; and sometimes it’s just to save our very lives. If you are heading towards the cliff and no one warns you, then you need to have help!

John 6:63 says, “..., the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” That’s a physical and a spiritual reality. That is physically true and spiritually true, so that the words of Jesus are both life and truth. I have had classes with people who have said that prophecy is hard to understand and there are lots of different interpretations of the same thing. As we learned in class this morning, you can be spiritually deceived. You may think you’re a Christian and you are not - like the lady hunting moose, for those of you who were here. (This reference was not explained.)

John 14:16-18 to verse 26 says that prophecy can only be understood by the power of the Holy Ghost, or the Holy Spirit. There is no other way. That’s how we can understand it. You remember the same person who wrote the book of John wrote the Book of Revelation. It says over and over, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” How many of you here today have an ear? (In an aside our speaker said Grant Snethen used to say that he had two ears, one an exhaust ear and an intake ear. And he always made sure that the intake ear was the little one, so not too much went in and then it went right on out. I don’t think that’s really true. I don’t know that Grant ever forgot anything.) But if you have an ear and believe the words of Jesus, one of the things He said was, and you find this in third Nephi 9:47, ‘Search the words of Isaiah.’

Isaiah is the biggest book of the Bible. It is interesting that we talk about him being a major prophet. It isn’t because he is more important. It is just because he wrote so much. Jesus, in Third Nephi 10:27, said, “Search the words of Isaiah”. Now, if He is telling you that more than once, so close together, do you think that is important? Probably. And then, in 10:32 He didn’t stop there. He said, “Search (the words) of the prophets.” And if you remember, Jesus said, “If you don’t believe the prophets, then you won’t believe the gospel even if somebody came back from the dead to tell you.”

The problem is that most people, and many Christians, don’t have any idea of what prophecy really is. Most of you here know who Alana is, my daughter. When she was little, Alana was the Ghost Buster child. The reason I say that is that when she was about three or four, we took her to the Ghost Buster movie, and I was a little concerned about that because I know that had spooky parts; but when the theme first came on, Alana stood up in the seat and started the most uninhibited dance I have ever seen, then jumped into the aisle and was dancing down the aisle. Many college kids were there,

thinking, “This is fantastic!” She did that every time the song was playing, so when we would go through town, they would say, “That’s the Ghost Buster kid!” They didn’t know who she was, but they knew that she really got into that song.

If any of you have seen this movie, you may remember they are driving across the Brooklyn bridge and Ray says, “He opened the sixth seal and behold there was a great earth quake, and the sun became as black as sack cloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the seas boiled and the skies fell.” Winston whimpered, “Judgment Day!” Now, the movie played this scene more than once. By the way, I don’t know whether Ghost Busters was supposed to be a comedy. In part it was, but it also was a very spooky horror show when you think about the things that were presented there. But the movie treated this as the laugh. Unfortunately, this is not a comedy, and the real thing is not going to be a comedy at all. It won’t be for laughs.

### **Our Choice - Life or Death**

Unfortunately, most Christians and non-Christians view prophecy this way - that God is a fire-breathing dragon that is out to slay us because of the way He is pictured in the Old Testament. Well, I just ask you this, “If Jesus Christ is eternal, and the Bible says He is, and Jesus Christ is the God in the Old Testament, then it is the same God, isn’t it?” The God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. Does the God of the New Testament want to just burn us all up? No! God doesn’t want to hurt the people that He created any more than you would want to hurt your own children or your grandchildren. He warns us about our sins. He tells us what is going to happen, as He said in the book of Amos; but His attitude, even as shown in the Old Testament, tells us that he cares about us very much. I read from the book of Joel, and this is one when you think of Joel, that is the “day of the Lord” stuff. But this says, (Joel 2:12-13) “Therefore also now saith the Lord, turn ye even to the Lord with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts, and not your garments, and repent and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and he will turn away the evil from you.” Also in Ezekiel 33:11 He says. “As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why should you die, O house of Israel?” We are going to have two choices - life and death. If He gave you the choice, how many want to choose life? That wouldn’t be a hard choice to make. That would be a no-brainer unless you were really hurting or something. Why would any of us choose death when we could choose life?

How much of the Bible do you think is prophetic? At least 25% of it was prophetic when it was written. A lot of those prophecies have been fulfilled. And what is its rate of accuracy? As I read stock prospectuses and try to figure out which stock to buy, they are not very accurate. What is the rate of accuracy in the Bible, all of the scriptures, for that matter? Perfect! 100%! Now if you want to be thought of that way, I can tell you how to do it. It is not hard. Just get 10,000 E-Mail addresses. To 5,000 of them, write and tell them something is going to happen. To the other 5,000, tell them the opposite. Whichever one happens, you take that group and you just tell them another thing that is going to happen and to the other half, another thing that is going to happen. Before long, you are going to have a bunch of people that thinks you are invincible. Are you? No! It’s just that if you can talk out of both sides, you can always be right. Well, God doesn’t do it that way, and the reason is that God knows the end from the beginning. He knows where we started and where



we are going to end up. As a result, He sees it all at the same time. It says that in Isaiah 46:9-10. God has promised, as He said in Amos, that He is not going to do anything unless He has told His prophets first, and that's comforting. He wants you, every one of you to know, to see, to consider, to understand what is going to happen. It says that in the scriptures over and over. One of the phrases that keeps coming up in the Old Testament, as you study the prophets it says, "And then you will know!" It just said that, "And then you will know!" Well, if this prophecy is given and it happens, and you believe that to begin with, there is no longer a belief, it is knowledge. You know that that is the case.

### **Prophecy Matters to You Only If you Believe It**

The scriptures also warn us that in the last day spiritual deception is going to mushroom. Because of that, there are going to be a lot of spirits leading away the hearts of men and women. That's particularly true when we consider prophecy. Let's suppose for a minute that I am talking about all the bad things - I am talking about earthquakes, and tidal waves and tornadoes and pestilence and so forth. And if I was talking about that some of you might be bored. You might even be falling asleep. But let's just say that as I am talking about earthquakes the floor of the church just opens up, and we have one. This thing just opens up and you see George's briefcase drop down through the hole into the ground. (That happened to my aunt, by the way. She moved to California. Her son said, "Come out here. This is great!" She hadn't been there very long and they had an earthquake, and her kitchen table fell right into the basement. Her whole house opened up and kind of fell into the basement, and she was on her way back to Michigan! She didn't think that maybe California was such a great place to live!) But if that was happening, the house was shaking and the ground was moving up and down, wouldn't you be saying, "God, save me!" or "Save my children!" You wouldn't suddenly think this was just an academic exercise. You would really say, "Hey! God, I believe! I believe! You got my attention!"

Well, does prophecy matter at all? The fact that you don't ever read Isaiah and Ezekiel and Habakkuk and Joel and Micah and all of those others that most of us can even hardly say their names - Zephaniah. (I remember hearing a country western song about going through the prophets. He was using Zephaniah, and I was thinking, "Is that a book?" I didn't remember that it was.) Prophecy only matters to you if you believe it. If you don't believe it, it is just another bunch of extraneous information.

Let's say that you were living in Jerusalem about 70 AD. And you notice that the Roman armies are starting to build a wall around the city. All of a sudden you remember a prophecy about fifty years earlier that said, when you see that, go and pack your bags, get a reservation, get the next plane out. No! It didn't say that. It said, "Don't stop to do anything. Flee! Head to the mountains. Get out of there!" It did. At that time the Romans began a four year campaign against Jerusalem. They fenced it off, and those who didn't die from starvation and pestilence they killed. Josephus and Eusebus and some of the early historians are all over the place as to how many, but there were about a million people who were killed. Who didn't get killed? Those who remembered that prophecy and took off out of there. In fact, some of these writers say that many of the Christians were saved because when they saw that wall going up, they remembered the scripture and they took off and got out of there before the wall was finished; and those who remained were destroyed by the Romans. Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled to the letter. Everything that He prophesied would happen to Jerusalem hap-

pened right down to that one block of stone would not be left on top of another. And when you looked at how big those stones were, that was quite a thing!

I would like you to consider this morning that God has told His prophets to prophecy about a gathering in Zion and in Independence. I am talking about, we call that Zion here, but Jerusalem has also been called Zion. (There are probably 50 or a hundred names for Jerusalem. One of those names, by the way is Sodom. Did you know that Jerusalem is called Sodom in the scriptures?) I would like you to turn to the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, verses 10-12. I hope that for many of you, this is familiar, because it is one of the more familiar passages in Isaiah. "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." Now, you have probably heard that scripture before.

### **The Time of The Regathering of Israel**

What time is He going to do this? The second time. That means He has already done it before. There is some argument about whether that has happened or not. I believe that is precisely why there is such a conflict in the Middle East, because the rest of the people who live there will not admit that God is doing exactly what He said He was going to do. Let me ask you this. How do we know that Israel will not simply disappear again from the world history? How can we be sure that Israel will not be scattered again and yet be recovered to the promised land sometime in the future, years and years, maybe even thousands of years from now? Well, the answers to all of those questions are in the prophets. For just a little quick history lesson, the first scattering occurred about 721 BC to 595 BC by Assyrians and the Babylonians. I might remind you, though, that the people were not scattered all over the earth at that time. They were all there in the Middle East. And when you read where the Lord is gathering them again, it's from the four corners of the earth.

Now, when I said to you, you have to remember your first five books of Moses to understand prophecy, there are about 360 quotes of the Torah in the Book of Revelation alone, and if you don't know what he is quoting from, you are going to misunderstand what he is saying. So let's go back to the book of Leviticus 26:42. It says, "Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land. . . ." Leviticus 26:45, "But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God; I am the Lord." You notice He is going to remember His covenant with Jacob, not with Esau - not with Ishmael, and he is going to remember the land. You know, ever since I went through this one course, I always think when they are talking about the news, when they are talking about the West Bank, I think, "Of which river?" because the covenant, the title deed to that land goes to the west bank of the Euphrates! For those of you who didn't do too well in Geography, that runs through the middle of Iraq, closer to Iran. That's where, when you are talking about it, it goes from the Nile to the Euphrates. That's what the promised land is. That's the title deed that God gave to His people of Israel.

Well, my wife is back in Colorado again, and she wanted a map again, so I ran some off. She needs a map. I will tell you that. She is not like the hunter who was moose hunting. She is not that bad, but she does need a map. So I would like to suggest to you that if God has revealed to His prophets everything that He is going to do, that in effect is the best map you can have of what is going to happen. Isn't it? God has revealed it all! And it is there. So, if it can be used as a map, what should we be doing if we would like to know where we are all going?

### **Timing Phrases To Remember**

I would like to suggest to you that if you take Israel and put it in the lenses of your binoculars, you have a whole different view of the world than you would otherwise have. There are a couple of phrases in the scripture, and I am not going to go into these very much other than to tell you that there are two phrases that are timing phrases. One of those is the "time of the Gentiles" and the other is "the fulness of the Gentiles". They are not the same, but they are something that will help you determine when this is supposed to happen, if you have the Holy Ghost with you. Jesus uses the phrase, the "times of the Gentiles" in answer to the question, "Tell us of Thy coming." Now, myself, I believe that ended in 1967 which means we are already quite a way past that timing event.

"The fulness of the Gentiles", I think that phrase refers to a spiritual reality and it has to do with God turning from gathering the Gentiles after Israel rejected their Messiah and is now going to turn to gathering the descendants of Jacob. Now, the reason I say that is that, if you remember that the Jews did reject the Messiah and so God turned to the Gentiles and for the last couple of thousand years, those of us who are Gentiles have been the beneficiaries of that act. In a sense this a new paradigm. Some people object to the idea of God having a paradigm, because God knows the beginning from the end. It may be correct to say that God doesn't have paradigms, but it surely appears to us from reading the scriptures that God has changed His way of thinking about things.

By the way, what a paradigm really means is that you have a view of certain things. That you have a paradigm - that you are thinking a certain way. You have a view over an area. It could be a large area or a small one. When I got married, my paradigm shifted. I had a whole new way of looking at things than I did before, and that's a popular word now. So God has now turned to the recovering of His people, Israel. The Gentiles are not going to be a primary interest in what He is going to do.

If you want to see what is happening. I don't know if you can believe this, but just let me tell you. This is my belief, and see if you think this isn't true. If you want to see what is going to happen in Independence, watch what is happening in Israel, because the same things are going to be happening. Those two cities are parallel in God's interest, and the same things are going to happen in both of them. I am going to suggest to you that there are going to be bad times for both. I read just recently about the New Madrid fault line. I was reading about a geologist who had studied the New Madrid earthquake, and by studying the earth, they estimated how big that earthquake was when that went off - back before most of you were born - about 1800 or so. (Actually 1811-12). They calculated that that earthquake was 8.8 on the Rickter scale. What that would mean today would be that in Memphis and Kansas City, half of everything there would be destroyed. Does that give you a new way of looking at it? Do you know what 8.8 is? That means half of Kansas City is gone if we have that kind of earthquake.

Well, Jesus talked about this same type of happening. He said

in Mark, There would be no flesh saved. I think that's a bad translation because when you find a similar account in Matthew, he is talking about Israel and he said, that none of their flesh would be saved if this didn't happen. That is Matthew 24:19 talking about Israel, not the whole world. So, I believe that if you are reading these scriptures properly, there aren't any contradictions; and if there are any apparent contradictions it is because you don't understand something, and as soon as you figure that out, you will see why it says what it says. Jesus said the generation when the times of the Gentiles would be fulfilled, shall not pass away until all be fulfilled.

Well, what's left to be fulfilled? I can think of a lot of things. How long does it take for those to be fulfilled? When you look at the list, not very long. How long did it take for all of the people to be converted in the Book of Mormon after the great earthquake that was there? Two years. That was all it took for everybody to be converted at that time. It can happen lots quicker than you think. I believe that God means exactly what He says, and if you are looking at scripture, you need to look at it literally first and try to interpret it that way. Most of the time the literal interpretation is the correct one. The promise is given over and over that we can trust God to do just what He says. In fact, Ezekiel 28 says, "And now the Lord has brought it about. He has done just as he said he will." Ezekiel makes that comment as he is reviewing the promises that the Lord made and watching what has happened.

So when you consider the gathering of Israel and the gathering of Zion, there are scores of places where He has promised to regather Israel back to their ancient homeland and to bless them there beyond all previous blessings. And He has made the same kinds of promises that go in terms of the gathering of the Saints in Zion. Well, if you want to find that, you have to go to the prophets, but don't stop there. If you want to know what God is like and what He wants from you, study Jesus and the prophets and study God's word. If you want to know what God thinks about the future, or the present or the past, or marriage, or sex, then examine what Jesus and the prophets tell about those things. Those are all in there! We have a distinct advantage in this church because we have three books of scripture and more is being added all of the time. So I am going to give you a test at this time. All of you, wake up. Test time. Who was the greatest Biblical prophet of all times? I will give you a hint. Jesus. Do you think of Jesus as a prophet? Moses said. I am going to raise up a prophet, and if you don't hear that prophet, things will happen. In fact, Jesus did actually prophecy more than any of the other prophets. If you look at Matthew 39, Mark 40. Luke 35, John, etc., you find numerous prophecies that Jesus is giving. What is His most hoped for prophecy? That He is coming back. For those that believe in Him, that is good news. If you don't believe in Him and you have lived your life in degradation, then it's not such good news.

### **Three Scriptures To Consider**

I would like for you to consider three scriptures right now. (I told Maria I was going to stop when more of you were looking at the clock than were looking at me.) This is Third Nephi 7:34-36. "And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you," (This is Jesus talking.) "At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations; And if they shall do all these things, and shall reject

the fullness of my gospel, behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fullness of my gospel from among them; And then will I remember my covenant which I have made unto my people, O house of Israel, and I will bring my gospel unto them; ... ." You know, this book right here (the Book of Mormon) is going to be the key in convincing Israel that Jesus is the Christ. Now, our small group hasn't done a very good job with taking this to Israel, but this is what's going to have to happen to make that happen, and I am not the only one that believes that.

Let's turn to the fourth chapter of First Nephi 17 through 19, and particularly verse 18. "At that day shall the remnant of our seed know that they are of the house of Israel, and that they are the covenant people of the Lord; And then shall they know and come to the knowledge of their forefathers, and also to the knowledge of the gospel of their Redeemer, which was ministered unto their fathers by him; Wherefore, they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer, and the very points of his doctrine, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved." How do you do that? You see, that's the thing. We talk about this. It says they are going to know how to come unto Him and be saved.

Then we turn for a moment to Romans 11:25-27. Jesus talks about blindness of His people and Paul says that that blindness is going to continue until, and you can read what it says: "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And then all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."

Have these prophecies been fulfilled regarding the Gentiles? Have they been fulfilled regarding Israel? If so, when? God has foreseen all of this. He knows the beginning from the end, and because of the sin of the Gentiles, God is going to turn back and remember the promises He made to Jacob and all of those covenants; and He is going to fulfill those. And when He talks about Jacob, that means that these are physical blessings as well as spiritual ones. Why is God going to do this? Why, Kelsey? Because He loves us. She had a wonderful testimony this morning. Many of you didn't hear it, but God loves us. And you know what? What do you want to do with people you love? You want to be with them, don't you? You want to live with them. You don't want to be separated from some people that you love, and God is no different. It is only natural. He wants to not only be with us. He wants to live with us. The term in the Bible is "Dwell" with us. Over and over in the scriptures, this message comes across that He wants to live with us.

Let me direct your attention to a few verses in the Torah. Exodus 19, verses 10-11. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, And be ready against the third day; for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai." Now there's your opportunity. Do you want to see God? He's going to come down. Yeah. Wash your clothes. Get ready. Sanctify yourself. Come out there and you can see God in front of all of these. And so Moses did that. He went down and said, "Wash your clothes. sanctify yourselves. You know, you're going to see God on the third day". And you know what happened? The people backed off and said, "We don't think we want to go see God. Moses, you go up and see what He has got to say and come back and

tell us, and we will do whatever it is that He tells you. We don't want to get that close to God"; and we are not any different when it comes right down to it. You might ask yourself this, if Jesus knocked on your door and said, "I would like to move in with you," what would you say? "Come in Lord. You are welcome as long as You want?" Would that change your style of living? Would it change the way you treat your spouses and your children. Would it change the way you talk about things? Of course, He can hear it all now, but it is different when He's standing here right in front of you.

Exodus 20:18-19. "And all the people saw the thunders, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." They didn't want to have any part to do that, and so God gave them something less. They could have had Jesus living with them at that time, but they refused. And so Exodus 25:8 says, "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." And we refer to that as the Shekinah glory, but only in Spirit.

Saints, we are called today to build a sanctuary, a refuge, an ensign for the people of this world. And the most important sanctuary we can start with is a place where His Holy Spirit can dwell within right now, and that's us. But to do that, you have got to desire to live with God. You have got to want Him in your home and in your your business, with your parties, and all I can say is that you can think about that. What if He was there! You might think about that this afternoon. With Jesus sitting there, are you going to change anything? God's purpose in doing this gathering, both in Jerusalem and in Zion is so He can come and live with us. So if you don't want to be there, fine. But if you want to be there, recognize who you are going to be living with. If you don't feel like you are ready to live with God, that always tells you that you have got some things to be doing in the short time you have got left.

Let me give you just a few short scriptures - these are out of the Doctrine and Covenants: "Behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you, and which shall dwell in your heart." Doctrine and Covenants 28:2g, "For I will reveal myself from heaven with power and great glory, with all the hosts thereof, and dwell in righteousness with men on the earth a thousand years, .. ." Now those of you that are not married, would you like to have Jesus conduct your marriage ceremony? Now, that would be different, wouldn't it? Why wouldn't He? He surely has got the authority to do it!

Section 76:5 j. We talk about celestial glory. What is one of the qualifications? It says you are going to dwell in the presence of God and His Christ forever and ever. You are going to be with them. Section 76:7 j. "They who dwell in his presence are the church of the Firstborn; and they see as they are seen and know as they are known ... ." And Doctrine and Covenants 101: 10d. What is "the purpose of building up My church and my Kingdom on the earth" (Note those are not the same,) and it is "to prepare my people for the time when I shall dwell with them, which is nigh at hand." That is what it says in that particular section.

You know, I think one of our problems is that we have been looking to a place. We are looking to a city. We are looking to a city here and on the other continent, and we really need to be looking to a person, because that's who is going to be there. The city is secondary. Our mission and our overwhelming desire ought to be that we want to serve as a co-laborer with Jesus Christ and to build Zion. How can we make this happen? That's what the scriptures



say. How are they going to believe in them? Let me tell you something. I have learned this in the last two or three months. The most important things in life are the things that are the most easily delayed. Just think about that for a few minutes. The most important things in life are the things that are the most easily postponed and delayed. Are you postponing anything in your life, saying I will do that later? Are you?

You know that scripture that I read in the beginning, "Put on thy strength, O Zion," What did God mean by that? I know what He meant, not because I figured it out but because Joseph Smith, the prophet was asked that and he said, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that Isaiah had reference to those whom God should call in the last days who should hold power of the Priesthood to bring again Zion and the redemption of Israel, and to put on her strength is to put on the authority of the Priesthood which she, Zion, had a right to by lineage and also to return to that power which she had lost. You find that in the second volume of Church History, page 138 where Joseph is being asked questions by the Priesthood and under the influence of the Spirit, he was answering them. And when this occurred, in that scripture that goes on about putting on their beautiful garments, it means that we are going to put on robes of righteousness and the Saints will sing that new song that is prophesied in Isaiah 54. You hear this in the scriptures many times. It is picked up many times, particularly in the Book of Mormon, and you think, "I wonder what that is talking about." But when you get it in the context, it says, "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord."

If you understand the meaning of that scripture, you will see that it is about to be fulfilled here on the earth today.

## Gain the Prize As Children Of the Light!

For his scripture reading Sunday, July 24, Elder Michael Jordison read Luke 16:13. And he said also unto his disciples, there was a certain rich man who had a steward; and the same was accused unto him, that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? For my lord taketh away from me the stewardship. I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely; for the children of this world are wiser in their generation, than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends, of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

He who is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in the least, is also unjust in much. If therefore

ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give unto you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

had it in my mind to speak to you this morning about the ancient Israelites in the day when Moses led them out of Egypt actually, the Lord led them out of Egypt through Moses and to liken that to our situation today in the church. But I didn't feel like that is really what the Lord wanted this morning, and I will pray that He makes His will known to us.

### Parable of the Unjust Steward

The Scripture that I read is a parable that Jesus gave to His disciples, His followers. The parable deals with a servant who is mishandling his masters goods. The master finds out about it and determines that he is going to fire him. So the servant says to himself, Oh no, I'm going to be fired. What should I do? I don't want to do work for myself, I cannot dig. I am not a person who is able to do heavy labor. I cannot beg, for I am ashamed. (That's probably what I would say. I would be ashamed to beg too I suppose.) So he decides that before he is let go he needs to find those who would be willing to help him out once he's unemployed. If he doesn't want to beg or do labor work, this is his best option he decides. Those whom he knows the best are those people he has been dealing with all along - those to whom he has been dealing with as steward. So he goes to one of them says, How much do you owe my master? and the debtor says, 100 bushels of wheat. The servant says, I'll tell you what, just write on this bill that you only owe eighty. And he goes to the next debtor and asks how much he owes. And he goes from house to house reducing the amounts owed to his master, believing that because he has helped these debtors out, they will in return sustain him for the time when he is unemployed.

Then the Lord does something really strange. He commends the dishonest steward for doing that! For he says, for the children of this world are wiser... And what's interesting is that we think of the children of this world as the wicked. (Now remember, this is Jesus who is telling this parable) He says, The children of the world are wiser in their generation, than the children of light. How can Jesus say that the wicked (the children of the world) are wiser than the children of the light or the children of the kingdom the believers?

Well I would say that we have some pretty wise people in our world today as well. In our congregation we have a couple of lawyers. Lawyers are pretty wise in their profession. Many know how to go in and find the loop holes in the law so they can get around it or bend it a little. They go to school for how many years?

Michael looks out and the congregation, and then continues, We don't have our lawyers here. I was going to ask one. I know it takes a many years of schooling to pass the bar. And once they've passed it, they spend hours and hours more in their practice reading about past cases to find ways to help their clients get around the law. Not all lawyers do that, but many do. Lawyers are wise in that what they do in their profession, they do it skillfully at least the good ones do. They take an enormous amount of time and effort to be wise.

Doctors are also very wise. Medical students also go to school for many, many years. And when they get out of med school, they go on to fulfill their residency and then hopefully sit down to practice medicine. They have devoted countless hours of their life to get to this point, and after they have done all that, they still have

to continue to study. They have to keep up with the new illness and the new medicines that are developing all the time. Doctors are very wise in their profession.

So I am thinking, how many Christians spend that same effort studying and learning about the gospel of Jesus Christ? I really think that is what the Lord was saying. Here we spend so much energy and time developing skills that enable us to excel in our professions, and yet we lack that same energy in developing that which is really important knowing the gospel, knowing Jesus Christ. In a civilized and healthy society, children are taught to excel in whatever they do, to do their best! Jesus says that the wicked are wiser in what they do than the children of the light, or the His followers. I would liken that to us today.

This parable is just as relevant to us today as it was two thousand years ago. If we put any less energy into our spiritual career than we put into our secular career, there is the potential to love one more than the other. As He said, eventually you will either love one master or the other. You cant serve them both. So, it may happen earlier in life or later in life, but there needs to be a transition of the main thrust of energy put into our jobs or whatever our treasure is to what we put into the gospel. If we dont we are in danger of rejecting the gospel all together. We cannot serve God and mammon, it says.

Jesus goes on to say in Mathew 6:21, For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Our treasure is indicated by how much time we spend with it. If all our time is consumed by our profession, except for Sunday mornings, Jesus says that our work is our treasure. Our treasure could also be our recreation, or spending time with friends, or volunteering at various events.

#### **Consider Our Constitution and Our Choices**

We have had wise men try to alter our language to change the meaning of some of our words. When the Book of Mormon came out in 1830, the language of the time was different from the language of today. When King James had the Bible translated in 1611, the language was a little bit different. And so I pulled out Websters 1828 dictionary. I like to use it because its definitions of words are more in harmony with the application of our scriptures.

looked up the word constitution. When you hear the word, constitution what do you think of? Some of you might remember that in school we were taught that the Constitution is the founding document of our government - our organizational framework. Thats a part of Websters definition of listed under constitution - the established form of a government in a state, kingdom or country. A system of fundamental principle and ordinances for the government of a state or a nation. But there is another definition for constitution that I would like us to consider this morning. That being: the frame or the temper of mind, affections or passions, the state of being that form of being or peculiar structure and connections of parts which makes or characterizes a system or a body. Simply put, our constitution is who we are fundamentally what makes or drives us. Noah Webster always likes to put a little sentence in context with his definitions. He says, The New Testament is the moral constitution of modern society. (I dont know if that sentence could actually be applied today as truth. In 1828 I think it could have been.) I want to talk this morning about our constitution.

Most of you are aware, if you watched any news or television lately that today is the last day of the Tour de France. (It was determined that the race was finished and the expected one had won.) I usually listen to the news casts every hour on the radio, so

whether I wanted to know about it or not, it has been brought to my mind was Lance Armstrong going to win or not? How is he doing? So I want to talk a little about the Tour de France although that may seem kind of a strange discussion for a sermon.

Let me share a little background: the Tour de France, for those of who might be out of touch with the current media buzz, is an international bicycle race comprised of twenty-one different stages. A stage is just a mini-race, going from point A to point B, and the total of the twenty-one makes the race. Whoever is the fastest racer for all the stages combined wins the race. It isnt a continual race on the same track where they race around and around in a circle. They start in one location, race to a determined end, then jump to another part of the country and race the next stage. It may seem kind of strange as we dont think of races that way over here.

There are ten teams that race against each other. The race lasts about three weeks with usually about one day to rest. Now whats strange is that some of the team members are not there to win. Most of them are there to help the best riders of the team to win. So they develop strategies to position their members to win each stage.

The Tour de France was inaugurated in 1903, the same year that the Wright Brothers first flew. The first race was approximately 2,400 kilometers. Thats a long way. There were about 60 participants, of which only 21 finished. They were riding heavy steel-framed bicycles that weighed about thirty pounds on thick rubber tires. By comparison, today the race runs about 3,400 kilometers, which is a little over two thousand miles. The bicycles that are used today weigh about half as much, fifteen pounds or so. The frames are much stronger, made of composite materials which are not as prone to break, and the tires are a little more puncture resistant than those used just a few years ago.

At first the race stayed in the flat parts of France, with the nice easy gentle rolling hills, but in 1905 the race organizers decided that they would move parts of the race into the mountains. And for that move the racers labeled the organizers assassins. If you have ever tried to ride a one geared bicycle up a long steep hill, you can sympathize with them. Today the mountainous parts of the race are the favorite parts for the spectators!

\Of all the Tour de France winners, only two have been from the United States, Greg LeMond about twenty years ago, and Lance Armstrong, of whom we have all heard about in the news lately. Lance has won the last seven races (as of today) in a row now, which has never before happened. I think there were only four other gentlemen who have won five, but they didnt win them all in a row.

I know you have seen the pink breast cancer support bracelets many people are wearing these days. And youve probably seen some yellow bracelets as well. These yellow ones say: Livestrong, and they were designed by the Lance Armstrong Foundation. Lance Armstrong is a testicular cancer survivor, and has become a very prominent spokesman in the fight against cancer. Now a 33 year old native of Texas, in 1996 Lance was diagnosed with cancer, and was given a fifty-fifty chance to live. He lived, and in 1999 he came back to the cycling circuit and won his first Tour de France.

Hes a very controversial figure, if youve heard anything about him. A lot of people think he has been taking performance enhancing drugs to develop his body into this machine thats able to win all of these races. I would guess that most of his competitors are the ones who are saying that. Whether its true, I dont know. But there is also his attitude, which comes off as crass and egotistical. They say hes not very polite and they have other words for him which I will refrain from repeating.

Now Lance has a little bit of advantage over the rest of us. When he was born, his heart that was a third larger than the normal persons heart. The heart carries oxygen around through your veins to your muscles, and your muscles need the oxygen when you are exercising. So he has an advantage there. Hes getting more oxygen for the same amount of heart beats as you or I.

Another advantage is that he has twice the lung capacity as the average person. So not only does more oxygen go through his veins because of the large heart, but he has twice the amount of oxygen flowing through those veins to get to the muscle. And as if that isnt enough, through a rigorous training regime with lots and lots of diligence, he has developed a way for his cells to utilize that oxygen more efficiently; so he is using more of that oxygen once it gets there. So really, Lance has an advantage before he ever steps on that bicycle. So one is tempted to say, All right. Hes got all of these advantages. Its no wonder that hes winning more than everybody else.

That thought got me to thinking, what if there was a race in which everybody had the same physical advantages that Lance has? That would be a real race, wouldnt it? Everybody would be at an even starting place. Well, lifes not that way. Now, many of the racers have different advantages over the others. But I dont think its the physical advantages in Lances body that allow him to win. Sure they help, but theres more to it. So were going to talk about Lances constitution here, and we are going to liken his to a Christian's constitution.

Remember, the parable said that the children of the world are wiser than the children of the light. I would liken Lance to a child of the world for he is very wise in what he does. He has a strict training schedule that he adheres to, and he doesnt vary from it at all. He is extremely focused during training. What he puts into his mouth are foods designed to help his body work to its maximum potential. He knows that any deviation from his routine can set him back weeks in his preparation. If he breaks down and falters, that may cause him to miss his goal to win the race; and hes stated that goal is predominantly to win the Tour de France. A few years ago after he was in the Olympics he was asked about the honor of being there. The Olympics were great, he said, but theyre not the Tour de France. The Tour is his goal, even greater than the Olympics. And Lance Armstrong does whatever it takes for him to excel in the world of bicycling, which culminates in winning of the Tour.

Close to fifteen years now Ive subscribed to an outdoorsy magazine and every July issue for the last seven years there has been an article about Lance Armstrong. Usually I just skim through them and dont think too much about it, but as I was looking at this Julys issue I read about 2004 Tour de France. Id like to share a little about the race because I think it gives a good illustration of how Lance Armstrong was able to overcome his competitors and to win the prize as a child of the world.

The Apostle Paul refers to this life, or probationary period as a race. If the children of the world are wiser in what they do than the children of the kingdom, then perhaps we can gain some understanding in how to make ourselves better followers of Christ by studying one of them. That we might finish the race and win the prize.

In the 2004 Tour de France, there were again 21 stages, just a little over 2000 miles. On the flat parts of the race, racers could run along at about 45 miles an hour, which slowed considerably as they moved into the mountains, with some grades approaching 8%. I

dont understand calculus well enough to explain how to determine what a grade translates to, but if you have ever been in the mountains, as I have, you will see these signs that say something like WARNING 6% grade ahead, Trucks check your brakes if youre at the top of a hill. Or it may say Trucks use low gear if youre at the bottom of the hill. Its usually a pretty steep incline at a 6% grade, so you can imagine an 8% grade is steeper yet. I dont think I could go up a hill like that. Some of these stages are over 100 miles on grades like that. They are pretty treacherous.

Lance was a member of the United States Post Office Team, called Team Postal, and he, along with a German named Jan Ulrich, and an Italian, Ivan Basso, were the three speculated to have a chance to win the race. They went through the first stages of the race neck and neck and when they came to stage 12, it was the toughest, most difficult stage of the entire race. It was in the Pyrenees Mountains of southern France and was 132 miles long with grades up to 8%, up, down, up, down, etc. I think there were about five climbs and descents for whole 132 miles and at the very end was one continuous grade over 8%, eleven miles up to the finish line. (After all of that torture, you had to finish going up!)

Team Postal decided they were going to develop a strategy of dominance through the toughest part of this stage. They were going to put on an air that it was no big deal. A lot of international cultures think of Americans as macho egotists and they were going to magnify that perception. (I think we can be like that in the church sometimes, too, if we are not careful; thinking that were better than others because we have more. When in reality were held to a higher standard than the others because we have a greater accountability. And that higher standard may put us back a notch below those who dont have as much knowledge, if we arent utilizing what we have to its potential.)

So [Team Postal decided that] they were going to try to lead the entire pack of riders for the full stage. That was their goal: to be in the front. Now often times in the race you will take turns at the lead. One team will be in front to break the wind while the others rest up. Then when they get to a point where they feel they are the strongest, another team will surge into the lead. Team Postal decided who their strongest cyclists were for each part of the stages, and they were the ones who were going to take the lead and push the other members of their group to follow. After the stage one of the other teams members noted that near the end of the race he looked at the pelaton (French for platoon) and there were about twenty riders. Of those twenty, seven were from Team Postal, which is a lot! And they were in the lead. To make this difficult stage look easy they made jokes to one another while within earshot of the other riders. They flipped their water bottles at each other occasionally and one of them was even caught riding without using his hands. He really wanted to make it look like this was no big deal. It was designed to be a psychological breaking for the other teams.

One by one, as they got near the end, the racers dropped off, until at last there were just the two, Lance Armstrong and the Italian, Ivan Basso. Near the end of the stage, Lance just took off! He blew right on past Basso as fast as he could as though he had just entered the race, with the momentum gained by his teams tactics. Because they had made it look easy, the others felt defeated before the race was ever over. They felt like they just couldnt compete. Was Team Postal really the powerful machine that they set out to portray? What drove them wasnt strictly their physical stamina. They werent necessarily any stronger than the other teams. But it was because they worked together as a team. They utilized each of



their individual talents - each of their individual strengths together when those strengths were needed. And they were able to overcome each of the other teams in that race. It was not Lance by himself who won that race! It was preparation, strategy, team cooperation and stamina that won that stage. It was the entire team that helped him, and they were all working for the same goal for Lance to win.

The Christian race is much the same. When we each have the same goal, we must work together developing a strategy to help us achieve that goal, relying on individual strengths at opportune moments. Its important that we are confident in that goal and in Him who gives us the strength to complete any task that is before us, no matter how difficult it is perceived.

Three days later found them up North in the Alps. This stage was 112 miles with seven different climbs. As most of you know, the Alps are really high, and the air is pretty thin which makes the need for more oxygen even greater. Near the end of the stage Lance was trying to take the lead when the German, Jan Ullrich, took off. In overall time, Lance was still ahead, but he wanted to win that stage. Ullrich was trying to close the distance between first and second place by winning the stage. He and Ivan Basso were fighting back and forth for second place; so he took off just as fast as he could. But he didnt last very long. The mountains had taken their toll, and he was left to hobble in behind the leaders. And so once again, leading at the end of the stage, there were just the two, Lance Armstrong and Ivan Basso.

Just before the finish line there was a tight left hand turn. The racers could see that there was a turn, but they didnt know the extent of it, how tight or narrow it might be, because they couldnt see around the thronging crowd who are lined up along the route. When they reached the turn, Lance took his opportunity and as Basso was turning, he dove in and cut him off with a real tight turn. Usually racers dont take blind turns so aggressively like that because they dont know how that curve is going to bend. It wouldnt take much to wipe out and put yourself out of the race. And because it was near the end, one fall and there be no time to catch up before the finish. But Lance did it anyway and sprinted the final bit that stage to take first. He had won again.

Well, it turns out that a couple of months earlier, back in May, Lance had been to that same place while training; and he knew that bend in the road. He knew exactly how to take it, what was on the other side, and he remembered it in the race. That was what enabled him to go ahead and make that cut because he was confident that he could take it so. His prior preparation paid off. The whole stage was a lot of work, but winning it really came down to just one moment in the race, the moment that mattered. And because of that prior preparation he was able to push into the lead win the stage by a minute and a half.

When we find ourselves near the end of our rope we are most vulnerable. It takes more than brute strength to overcome the barrage of attacks from the adversary when we are at our weakest. Thats when we are most prone to fail. We need to be prepared for those times before they arrive. Studying the scriptures, communion with the Lord in fasting and prayer implants knowledge and strength that can be used when our defenses are weak by the mountains of life. To recall a scripture during a moment of temptation, or a bit of revelation gained during a fast when a friend is in need of help, is something that can only be achieved when weve taken the time and effort to prepare.

The next leg was stage 16. It was just a time trial of just less than ten miles. Time trials are just individual races. Races go one at a

time, and they go as fast as they can, racing against the clock, not each other. When everyone has finished the stage, the one who did it in the fastest time wins. Now, throughout the entire race Lance had to ride through obscenities yelled at him, signs put up against him. They even wrote on the streets he rode on things like, Lance go home! That was nothing new for him, but the night before the stage he received a death threat. Somebody said that they were going to kill him. His most vulnerable time would be during this stage. Usually when you are in a group of riders, it is hard to get to you without getting somebody else. Lance debated, should I go ahead and race or not? He thought, I want to win the prize. Im going to go ahead and go through with it!

They beefed up security, sending motorcycles ahead of him to shove people out of way. At the first part of the stage there were no barriers to hold the crowd back, and the crowds were pressing in. People were in his face shaking their fists, throwing beer and spitting on him. He made one comment after the race that he got a little bit of satisfaction because he was moving so fast that they couldnt really hit him with their spit! But he made it through with that same focused drive that he had shown in the rest of the race. He got up to the top of the climb, which is the midway point of the stage, and he looked over to the clock which gives you your time compared with the current leader. The clock said 40 seconds faster than the fastest time yet. Through all of that adversity, those people yelling at him, worried about being killed or hurt, he made it up faster than anybody else had for that stage. Then he continued on with that same drive and went on to win the stage by a minute and a half.

It wasnt necessarily Lance's physiology that allowed him to win the stage. It was his constitution - what made him - all of his understanding, his psychology, and his determination. He knew what his goal was. He wanted to win that stage. He wanted to prove that he could do it even in spite of somebody threatening his life. And in just a few days after that, it was Lance Armstrong who rode in to Paris wearing the leaders yellow jersey to win the Tour de France.

There are many times in life when we are afraid; unsure if we should go on, unsure if we can go on. These are times when we must remember our goal. Can we really attain our goal if were afraid to go through times of adversity? Jesus taught that whoever was afraid to lose their life for the sake of the gospel would lose it anyway. Our goal should be eternal life with our Lord. We must learn to face difficulties, having a determination that something which is temporary hardship in this life should not deter us from achieving an everlasting peace. We should have the satisfaction knowing that no matter what the world throws at us spits in our faces we already have the promise of that peace and eternal life.

#### **To Preach Jesus Christ**

Thats a lot about Lance Armstrong, but I dont want to preach Lance Armstrong up here. I want to preach Jesus. Lance is an example of one who is wise in the ways of the world. He knows and does whatever it takes to win in his discipline. Remember what Jesus said; the children of the world are wiser in their generation than the children of the light. So I am looking at Lance and thinking, Man! He is really driven! He is really motivated to win. He has a body that is so far exceptional to mine that I could never hope to compete against him. But its his constitution that enables him to use that body. No matter what type of person he is, he is a disciplined and determined individual striving to achieve his goal. And shouldnt we as Christians have that same drive - that same determination to

share the gospel?

The Apostle Paul was a devout Jew, very strict in observing the laws as he understood them. And he was also very strict about persecuting the Christians. Whatever he did, he did it with the same drive and determination that Mr. Armstrong exhibits. Paul was a child of the world. Though he was a deeply religious man, his religion was the outward ordinances not the inward soul cleansing. But after his conversion, Paul became a child of the light, literally you could say. He was blinded by the light of Christ and he was born of that experience. He was born of the light. He was a child of that light. It changed him, and yet he kept the drive and determination that he used in following the Mosaic Law and applied it to his newfound faith in Jesus Christ. It didn't wane.

He went into the desert for three years after that experience and after he came out he went up to Jerusalem and tarried with the Apostles there. Just as Jesus went into the desert for 40 days in preparation of his ministry Paul went there to commune with God, to be prepared for his ministry. And when he came out, he became the most prolific writer in the New Testament, and most widely traveled missionary as an Apostle to the Gentiles. And in his ministry, through his letters, he spoke about his constitution and the constitution of the believer. He said, I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20, (my favorite verse.) His motivation and drive took him so far that he realized that as a disciple of Christ, Paul didn't exist anymore. It was Jesus who lived within him. Throughout all of his letters he talks along this same vein with baptism representing one's death, while a new creature is raised up to live.

And Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, (1 Cor. 9:14) wrote this. Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live the gospel. I have had a few conversations about the role of the Priesthood lately, and at the end I have noted that in my conversation I have condemned myself as a minister because I don't live the gospel as I ought to. This is the motivation that we are supposed to have, especially those of us who hold Priesthood, that they which preach the gospel should live the gospel, for it were better for me to die than that any man should make my glorying void. For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel. (1 Cor. 9:15-16).

Let me just add a little bit more here. (We are watching Bob Bobbitts DVD in class, and Bob mentions this too in his evangelical ministry.)

(1 Corinthians 9:19-20). For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. ... To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

When we go into the world we need to utilize whatever resources we can in whatever circumstance we find ourselves in to gain some souls for Christ - to share the gospel. When we go to Africa, when we go to the Navaho Indian reservation, when we go to the neighbor down the street, we are to work according to the understandings of the people there. Sometimes we get dirty. Sometimes we go into places we may not want to go. Sometimes we go to places where we are very uncomfortable, but if our motivation is to win some for the gospels sake, then I think, the Lord is telling us,

Go! and do it! We need to be come all things to all people, being what they need us to be.

So that's really what our constitution should be made of: a motivation to live the gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to be people who are focused and driven to share the gospel of Christ more than anything else that we spend our energies in. That's what Jesus taught in His parable. If He is to trust us with great riches, we must be worthy of great riches in the small things that we do. Even the small things must be done with a determination to serve the Lord.

And so, I am going to charge each of you, if you don't see me living the gospel, let me know about it, because what happens here is that if we don't live the gospel - if I don't live the gospel - eventually where my passions are, where my desires are will overcome whatever desire I have to serve the Lord. George Knotts has a tract entitled, *What's Your Heart's Desire?* which says that ultimately we get what we desire, whether right or wrong. We all need to help each other. Please help me, and I will try to help you, and hopefully we can all gain the prize as children of the light.

## **News and Notes**

### **Youth on Wining Team**

Ben Mitchell's Grant City (MO) Tigers won their Little League baseball tournament held at Barnard, Missouri on the Fourth of July weekend. This is the first time on four tries that they were able to defeat their most persistent competitors, the team from Conception Junction, Mo.

### **Becomes Full Fledged Engineer**

Patrick Bastow recently passed his tests to become an Engineer.

### **Fasting Weekend Observed**

July 10-12 was chosen as the time for the congregation to fast from Friday noon until Sunday noon praying for those who know not God. At the times when we would normally have been eating, we gathered for prayer. Friday evening we gathered at the home of Ron and Di Smith in Lamoni. Saturday morning we gathered at the church for a work day, worshipping there at eight in the morning and again at the noon hour. We took advantage of the opportunity to have Michael Jordison demonstrate the new electronic equipment purchased by the congregation to expedite sharing the gospel message in an effort to teach others of us how to operate it. Saturday night we were again in Lamoni at the Norman and Cathy Nelson home; and on Sunday we worshipped at the church in Mount Ayr. The next fasting weekend was announced for October 21-23.

### **Restoration Hymn Sing Announced**

Sunday, September 18 at 7 p.m. has been set for the Joseph Smith Bicentennial Hymn Festival at the Auditorium, 1001 West Walnut, Independence, Missouri. Those wishing to sing in the choir need to register by calling 1-816-833-1000 ext. 1434. There is a mandatory choir rehearsal at 4:00 p.m. before the 7:00 p.m. performance.

Nathan Smith will be playing the piano as part of the service and Valle Smith will be a reader.

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## From the Pastor's Desk

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true points of doctrine. Peter says that the unlearned and unstable wrest the scriptures to their own destruction. (II Pet 3:16)

In our own faith, we face the same challenge. Some quote a scripture and say, "that's all there is". "Nothing more is needed". For example, DC 3:16 is quoted, "Behold, this is my doctrine: Whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church; whosoever declareth more or less than this, the same is not of me, but is against me..." I would ask, "Is Jesus against himself"? For He said, "in his doctrine, Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow..." (Mk 4:3) "And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes..." Don't both of these scriptures include "more"? How about another scripture from 3 N 5:39-42: And again I say unto you, Ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in no wise receive these things. And again I say unto you, Ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine; and whoso buildeth upon this, buildeth upon my rock; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil..." I think the scripture in 3 Nephi more clearly states what it means to "come unto him". Saints, we need

to follow the whole gospel, not bits and pieces. Otherwise we are merely following in the image of our own God.

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## News and Notes

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### **Births Announced**

Elisha Joseph Cornish was born July 17 to Erin (Smith) and Peter Cornish presently of Bryan, Texas. Elisha Joseph, to be called Eli by his family, is the first grandchild of Alan and Valle Smith of Mount Ayr and Verle and Sally Cornish of Independence, Missouri. The young family will soon be moving to Champaign - Urbana, Illinois where Peter has his post doctoral assignment at the University of Illinois.

Another grandchild has been born to members of the branch as well.

Kaaylee Lynn Ballantyne was born March 31, 2005 to Michelle and Drew Ballantyne of Independence, MO.

### **Seventy's Return From Africa Imminent**

Seventy Ronald K. Smith expects to return from the latest mission to Africa on August 5. He and his fellow ministers have been serving in Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya for the past three weeks. He has been traveling with Stephen Ferguson, Aaron Smith, Eric Odida, Tom Okeyo and others of the local African ministry.

### **Pastor Ministers at Reunion**

Pastor Robert Rolfe and Wife Lynda were guests at the Woodbine Reunion in Northwest Iowa where Rob gave preaching ministry.