

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

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On Being A Pastor

I am humbly serving as your pastor for another year after the elections held recently with the hope that we will again make progress toward the kingdom in our relationships with each other in our families, our church family and our communities in the coming year.

This summer has been a busy time with many people gone for various reasons so it was good Sunday to see so many at church and to feel like it is our church homecoming as we gather back together for a new church year.

I would like to thank all the people who have been so good about accepting responsibilities for the new year and pray that each of us will be able to contribute to a wonderful church year together.

We would like to again have aspects of worship, outreach, fellowship and service as part of the things we do together. If you have ideas for people that we can help with service projects, please let me know.

We are glad for the college students who are here for the year at Graceland University and we hope to they will feel like we are a church home away from home for them this year.

I am more and more convinced that we show we are the church of Jesus Christ if we are bearing fruits of the kingdom in our branch. Are we sharing in the spirit of God so that righteousness, peace and joy are evident in all we do? If there are times when this is not the case, I hope we will be able to improve in the coming year.

I would ask that you would keep our branch in your prayers that we will be able to be able to bring the rich ministry the Lord wants in the year ahead.

TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

Righteousness -- Foundation of the Kingdom

Kathleen Myers had sung, "Let Us Break Bread Together on Our Knees". The ordinance of the Last Supper had been completed, and Elder Alan Smith came to the pulpit to speak.

If what we just did is what the Lord wanted us to do this morning, we should be nearer to having His Kingdom among us. Do you realize that? I have been looking, over and over again recently at the way we look at what we are doing to be called His church. It seems to me that unless we are bringing about His kingdom - unless we are the bride who is bringing forth that child, we can't be called His church!

And so, I think the exciting thing about the Restoration movement is that Jesus set up the church and gave us all these extra tools to actually do what He wanted His church to accomplish - to develop the relationships of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost that are His kingdom. I believe that this indicates that the Kingdom is about relationships - the peace and joy between us - but it is also about the relationship of righteousness, which is our relationship with our heavenly Father as well as with each other.

When Paul talks about the Kingdom being about righteousness, peace and joy, I think he is saying the same thing that Jesus said when He said the greatest commandment is to love God and then to love each other as we love ourselves. Too often, I think, we want the church to be about getting along with each other and sharing in fellowship, not remembering that unless we have righteousness in our lives, unless we are trying to follow what the Lord wants us to do, to keep His commandments and know what those are, we can't be actually moving toward His Kingdom as fast as we would like to. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, and again in the sermon He gave in the new world, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness." Isn't it interesting that we share in Communion to fill our hunger and to fill our thirst. Are we hungering and thirsting after righteousness when we come to do this this morning?

Water That Quenches Thirst

We had an experience on our trip this summer in Germany. We

did a lot of hiking and walking. We would fill up water bottles before we would go out for the day. Then we could have water with us as we walked around. By mid afternoon, the water in the water bottles was not very cool. It was just kind of wet. I guess it was good to have some liquid, but it didn't necessarily quench your thirst to be drinking warm water. We had been hiking at King Ludwig's Castles one afternoon, doing a lot of climbing and we came around a corner in a path. There was a rock with a metal pipe coming out of it with water continuously flowing from the pipe, and there was a kind of rock basin underneath it where the water was falling and running away. If my German was right, and I hope it was, there was a little sign there that said the water was okay to drink. Anyway, we drank the water. It was from a spring in the side of the mountain. Maybe it was just how thirsty I was, but that water was the best water I think I have ever tasted! It was just refreshing and cool. I don't know quite how to explain, I guess, how great that water from that spring was and how it tasted and quenched my thirst. So we drank all we wanted. Then we poured out our old water and filled up our water bottles from the water from the spring. We realized that, even though this was fresh water, after awhile it might not be as refreshing as it was coming straight out of that spring.

It's hard to describe to you what that water tasted like and how refreshing it was unless you had been there and had been able to taste it that moment for yourself. It reminded me of the living water that Jesus promised. He didn't talk about it being well water that sat there in the bottom of the well and you dipped it out. He talked about it being living water - moving water. I think of it now as maybe like that water from that spring on the side of the hill there in Germany. He said that the water that He would give us would truly quench our thirst. We wouldn't have to go back and carry it all of the time like the lady at the well was doing. But that living water is something you have to experience for yourself. I can't experience it for you and tell you what it is like. You can not understand until you have actually had some of that water yourself.

Why is righteousness in the Holy Ghost such an important part of what we want to do in the Kingdom? I just looked up some of the scriptures in just the Doctrine and Covenants which talk about righteousness, the promises that come to us as we try to have it in our lives, and how important it is to us. You don't have to go very far into the Doctrine and Covenants until you find out one of the reasons the Restoration movement was begun. How about Section one, verse three? "The day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of His servants, neither give heed to the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people; for they have strayed from mine ordinances, and have broken mine everlasting covenant; they seek not the Lord to establish His righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall."

In other words, when we turn away from understanding and following the scriptures, from keeping the commandments of the Lord. What happens to us? We begin to follow our own ways. We begin to say, "This is how to be righteous. I can do it my way!" The scriptures warn us that is not going to get us into the Kingdom. Righteousness is important to the Kingdom, the scriptures tell us. In Section 97:4 it says, "For I will raise up unto myself a pure people, that will serve me in righteousness; and all that call on the name of the Lord and keep His commandments, shall be saved."

That's what the Lord wants from us - to be a pure people that serve Him in righteousness.

Or as recorded in section 36 of the Doctrine and Covenants, in the experience of Enoch. "The Lord called His people Zion," Why? "because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them."

Righteousness and the Kingdom

Is it important? Is righteousness important to the Kingdom? That's how it is described. The righteousness we are talking about - this right relationship with our Heavenly Father, isn't something that we do just ourselves. We understand that, and the Doctrine and Covenants, 76:4g again helps explain this to us when it tells us, "This is the Gospel, the glad tidings which the voice out of heaven bore record unto us, that He came into the world even Jesus to be crucified for the world and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness; that through Him all might be saved, whom the Father had put into His power and made by him; who glorifies the Father, and saves all the works of his hands, except those sons of perdition, who deny the Son after the Father has revealed Him." It is through Jesus and the gift of Eternal life that He gave us that we come to that righteousness. But then, it is how we respond and keep the commandments that makes the difference.

Is God calling us to just to be a Pharisee, or whatever the ones who said, "I have got every rule down to the minute detail and I only do what I am told?" The Doctrine and Covenants tells us that is not the kind of response that truly makes us righteous. He doesn't want us to check off all the good things that we have done. He wants us to be using our intellect, our mind to come up with ways that we can be of service - to be doing the things that

He wants to have in His kingdom. In Section 58 of the Doctrine and Covenants He says, "Verily I say, Men should be anxiously engaged in 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. And inasmuch as men do good, they shall in no wise lose their reward. But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded," (I'm not going to do it until You tell me to), "and receiveth a commandment with a doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned." Is that the kind of response we do for the Lord? Do we say, "Well, if You just tell me more. Of course, the one You already told me to do, I am not sure that that was really what You wanted me to do, and maybe I will do that tomorrow"? Is that the kind of Kingdom builder we are? The Lord goes on and says, "Who am I that made man, saith the Lord, that will hold him guiltless that obeys not my commandments?" (Am I just going to let it go?) "Who am I, saith the Lord, that I have promised and not fulfilled? I command and a man obeys not, I revoke and they receive not the blessing; then they say in their hearts, This is not the work of the Lord for His promises are not fulfilled. But woe unto such, for their reward lurketh beneath and not from above."

We were outside of Saltzburg in a room one night. We didn't follow the rule because we didn't know it. The rule was, "You don't turn the light on with the window open." They don't have screens in Germany and Austria. They just have windows. They open sideways or they can open up and down from the top. We were in an area where as soon as you turned the lights on with the window open, and you had to have a window open to get air, you drew the mosquitos. The blessing of a good night's sleep was not mine that night! In Germany you have a sheet over the mattress. Then they

give you a feather bed to cover up with. So my choice was to burn to death under the feather bed to keep the mosquitos off or to kick the feather bed off and be a picnic for the mosquitos. I ended up being a picnic for the mosquitos by morning.

I think that is kind of how the Lord is. The rule was, "Don't open the window with the lights on. I didn't know that rule, but we figured it out after that night. So the Lord gives us a rule and says, "If you want to have a peaceful night, don't open the window with the lights on." Yet we go ahead and open the window with the lights on and then we can't understand why He didn't give us a peaceful night. The Lord tells us that when He commands us, we need to receive the commandment, not with a doubtful heart, and not keeping it slothfully; but when we follow what He asks us to do, then He can bless us.

Sometimes when we think about righteousness, we begin to get a little self righteous. We begin to look at other people's faults and not at our own. The Lord says that's not the way our relationships should be, either. In Section 59 He says, "You shall offer a sacrifice to the Lord, thy God in righteousness, even of a broken heart and a contrite spirit." If we come to others in humility and love, and try to help others learn about righteousness in what happens in their lives, we come with a whole different point of view.

Maintaining Righteousness

And is it important that we meet together if we are going to work on righteousness, or can we do that just ourselves? You sometimes hear people say, "I can worship just as well by myself somewhere else as I can in the congregation"; but if we are going to follow what the Lord wants us to do, in Section 59, this is what He says. After He tells us that we need to come with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, Section 59:2 continues, "And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day; for verily this is a day appointed unto thee to rest from thy labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High; nevertheless, thy vows shall be offered in righteousness on all days and at all times; ...". (We are not supposed to be doing this just one day a week. We are supposed to offer our vows in righteousness on all days, and at all times, but it is important that if we want to keep ourselves unspotted from the world that we meet together in prayer and offer up our sacraments.) "But remember on this day, the Lord's day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments, unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren and before the Lord." "... verily I say that inasmuch as ye do these things, the fullness of the earth is yours; ... yea, all things that cometh of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart; yea for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul. And it pleases God that He hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made, to be used with judgment, not to excess neither by extortion; and in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is His wrath kindled save those who confess not His hand in all things, and obey not His commandments. Behold, this is according to the law and the prophets; wherefore, trouble Me no more concerning this matter, but learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come."

When we are talking about the kingdom. we begin with righteousness. Then the Lord says, "I created this whole world for you to share in joy, and you shall receive your reward - peace in this world." So, if we can begin with righteousness, peace and joy of

that Holy Spirit can be part of our lives. And there are wonderful promises if we can learn this way. I would like to share a couple of them in the time we have left.

This is from section 76 in the Doctrine and Covenants. "For thus saith the Lord, I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end; great shall be their reward; and eternal shall be their glory; and to them will I reveal all mysteries; yea, all the hidden mysteries from my kingdom from days of old; and for ages to come will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will concerning all things pertaining to my Kingdom; yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them, even the things of many generations; their wisdom shall be great and their understanding reach to heaven; and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught; for by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will; yea, even those things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man." What do you think of that promise? Those who will serve Me in righteousness and truth unto the end - those who fear Me and delight to honor me can have that blessing.

Further blessing is recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 10:4: "Keep my commandments, and assist to bring forth my work according to my commandments, and you shall be blessed." That is a definition of righteousness - "Keep my commandments and assist to bring forth my work according to my commandments, and you shall be blessed. Behold, thou hast a gift, or thou shall have a gift if thou will desire of me in faith, with an honest heart, believing in the power of Jesus Christ, or in my power which speaketh unto thee, for behold, it is I that speak; behold, I am the light which shineth in darkness, and in my power I give these words unto thee.

"And now, verily, verily I say unto thee, Put thy trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good; yea to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit. Verily, verily, I say unto you, I will impart of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy, and then shall ye know, or by this shall ye know all things whatsoever you desire of me, which is pertaining unto things of righteousness, in faith believing in me that ye shall receive."

Would you like to know - to have all of your questions answered pertaining to things of righteousness? If you keep My commandments and assist to bring forth My work according to my commandments, you will be blessed this way.

We have a tool for righteousness that we shared in this morning - the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. We can find that living water for our lives when we come in repentance and receive forgiveness in our lives and become right with our heavenly Father; and He gives us again that Holy Spirit which brings peace and joy and helps us build the relationships with each other that are needed for the kingdom.

Many other scriptures in the Book of Mormon and the Inspired Version also help us understand why righteousness is so important, not just seeking peaceful and joyful relationships with those around us. With the right relationship with God, we can have the gift of the Holy Spirit which helps us to develop the relationship with others that allow peace and joy to reign. How blessed we are to have a Father who created us that we might have joy! A Father who sent His son to show us the way back to Him. And it says that we are only His church if we are bearing the fruits of His kingdom in our

relationships with each other so that His Son and Zion can return. I hope that makes what we did this morning meaningful to you - sharing in the bread and wine so that His Kingdom can be.

Have you drawn closer to that Kingdom this morning. I hope we all have as we have come to the table, as we have shared in repenting and asking the Lord to show us the way that we can have these Kingdom relationships with Him, with each other in our families, here in our congregation, in our communities, and eventually in the world that He may come.

Second Sunday Prayer Service

Pastor Alan Smith was in charge of the second Sunday of August prayer service. He opened the service reading Doctrine and Covenants 34:1a-b: "Listen to the voice of the Lord your God, even Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, whose course is one eternal round, the same today as yesterday and for ever. I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified for the sins of the world, even as many as will believe on my name, that they may become the sons of God, even one in me as I am in the Father, as the Father is one in me, that we may be one".

He then spoke. We have talked about meeting together to pray about being one and to ask for direction from the Lord for the church for several months now. I thought it might be interesting for us this morning to focus on some of the prayers that Jesus prayed that we would be one. He did that in His ministry both in Jerusalem and in the new world. His prayers in the new world came right after the angels came down and ministered to the children. Remember that story of how the children were circled around by angels and what a wonderful blessing that was? This is Third Nephi 9:17-36. I would like to pick up from there:

Prayers Christ Prayed For Us

"And it came to pass that he spake unto the multitude, and commanded them that they should kneel down again upon the earth, and also that his disciples should kneel down upon the earth. And it came to pass that when they had all knelt down upon the earth, he commanded his disciples that they should pray. And behold they began to pray; and they did pray unto Jesus, calling him their Lord and their God.

"And it came to pass that Jesus departed out of the midst of them, and went a little way off from them and bowed himself to the earth, and he said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these whom I have chosen; and it is because of their belief in me, that I have chosen them out of the world. Father, I pray thee that thou wilt give the Holy Ghost unto all them that shall believe in their words. Father, thou hast given them the Holy Ghost, because they believe in me, and thou seest that they believe in me, because thou hearest them, and they pray unto me; and they pray unto me because I am with them.

"And now Father, I pray unto thee for them, and also for all those who shall believe on their words, that they may believe in me, that I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one. And it came to pass, that when Jesus had thus prayed unto the Father, he came unto his disciples, and behold, they did still continue, without ceasing, to pray unto him; and they did not multiply many words, for it was given unto them what they should pray, and they were filled with desire. And it came to pass that Jesus beheld them,

as they did pray unto him, and his countenance did smile upon them, and the light of his countenance did shine upon them, and behold they were as white as the countenance, and also the garments of Jesus; And behold the whiteness thereof did exceed all the whiteness, yea, even there could be nothing upon earth so white as the whiteness thereof.

"And Jesus said unto them, Pray on; nevertheless they did not cease to pray. And he turned from them again, and went a little way off, and bowed himself to the earth; and he prayed again unto the Father, saying, Father, I thank thee that thou hast purified these whom I have chosen, because of their faith. And I pray for them, and also for them who shall believe on their words, that they may be purified in me, through faith on their words, even as they are purified in me. Father, I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me out of the world, because of their faith, that they may be purified in me, that I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one, that I may be glorified in them.

"And when Jesus had spoken these words, he came again unto his disciples, and behold they did pray steadfastly, without ceasing, unto him; and he did smile upon them again; and behold they were white, even as Jesus. And it came to pass that he went again a little way off, and prayed unto the Father: and tongue can not speak the words which he prayed, neither can be written by man the words which he prayed. And the multitude did hear, and do bear record, and their hearts were open, and they did understand in their hearts the words which he prayed. Nevertheless, so great and marvelous were the words which he prayed, that they can not be written, neither can they be uttered by man. And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of praying, he came again to the disciples, and said unto them, So great faith have I never seen among all the Jews; wherefore I could not shew unto them so great miracles, because of their unbelief."

Jesus prayed that we would be one, through the gift of the Holy Spirit and through being purified and glorified, as He did for His disciples in the new world. And then I would like to share with you the prayer of Jesus as recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John. (This prayer, because of its length, was on the front of our bulletins, so we could follow the reading.)

"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee; As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

"I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

"I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the

world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

“I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.

“As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

This is the prayer as we have it recorded of Jesus as He prayed for His disciples and for those of us even today who would believe on their words about Him. There are several things for which Jesus prayed. He prayed that we would know God and Christ, that we would be able to glorify God, that we would have Jesus’ joy within us, that we would be sanctified through the Word, which is truth, that we would be made perfect in one with Christ and that we would have that love that would help bind us together.

Prayers That We May Be One

Erin Cornish sang a song about being one which is taken from this scripture. and then we would like to let you pray. Maybe there is something in Jesus’ prayer here for us that you would like to use as your prayer this morning whether it is focusing on that we would be able to have that love, that joy or that we would be sanctified through His Word or that we would just have a better knowledge of God in Christ - any of these things that Jesus prayed for us. We would like to invite you to offer prayers this morning that we would be able to be one, not only in our families and in our congregation here, but as His church on the earth.

Erin sang: “It was in agony You prayed moments before You went away. You prayed to the Father/God that we would be as one. Coming before You hand in hand. United in purpose, here we stand. One kind with one heart. One mind that the world may know only You can make us one. Make us one. Make us one as You and the Father are one. Make us one. Make us one that the world may know You’re God’s Son.” Alan repeated: Make us one that the world may know You’re God’s Son!

Prayers were invited for unity, for being made one with Christ and one with God and one as His church? (Because of technical difficulties, only some of the prayers were recorded.)

The first prayer offered was that our Heavenly Father would

forgive our sins, “because we know that with our sins we can’t be one with You.” It asked that we might find joy in our lives, that we have one purpose and be united in Christ’s cause, that Zion my be again on the Earth - that we may find peace and all the wars and unrest be done away.

The second prayer was also for forgiveness and for those whom we might have offended to be able to forgive us. It was also that we might take time daily to study God’s word, to pray and to focus our lives on God.

The third prayer was thanksgiving for the love of God in our lives and a prayer that He might give His people a vision of that love God has for all people, for patience one with the other, be loving and kind no matter what another thanks or says but that we might see them through God’s eyes “because we know that You want all of us, Father. Help us to feel that we are part of one big family. Help us to get along, be tolerant of one another’s development because we know that we all develop at different levels.” The prayer was that as we move forward as a church, all of us would be blessed that we might come closer to our Heavenly Father and love each other so much that we might be one.

Thanksgiving was expressed for the opportunity to be with this faithful people who are praying to God to be one. We know that one day we will all have to see eye to eye, “And that will be refreshing.” The prayer was that our hearts would be knit together so we can be one.

A prayer of one who lives in an area in which there is no Restoration congregation began with thanksgiving for the opportunity to be present with people of like mind and faith praying that God would “continue to bind our hearts to Yours that our will might truly be Your will and our mind Your mind”, that we might have the common goal of sharing the fulness of the gospel and the joy that God’s Spirit brings with those who do not yet know it but might also be brought in so our circle might spread and all have a will to serve Our Lord with greater desire than we ever have, “That we might have the desire for You to come that it might affect every decision that we make and that Your coming might always be on the forefront of our minds. I pray that we might work diligently that we might have Your Kingdom in our life so we might have that righteousness, peace and joy that it offers and that our lives might be protected enough that Your Son can come and that we might have the peace that we so desire.” It ended with an expression of love for God and thanksgiving for His presence always with us.

A prayer was for the Kingdom to come for the sake of the world’s people, many of whom are hearing the gospel for the first time. Particularly mentioned were the 50 people who were recently baptized in Kenya. And it was for us to become one with them so Zion could return to the earth.

An expression of appreciation for all the mercies and blessings that have been bestowed upon us followed along with a prayer that we might come to know our Lord. “We share in our testimonies, we read Your Scriptures and we hear Your spoken word, yet sometimes, Lord, we distance ourselves from You. We ask that You encourage us that we might get to know You, for only by knowing You, each of us individually, can we come one.” it asked that many good people in the world be directed toward God and that we might be able to share in witness to them. It asked that The Lord might work in our families “that we might be able to see in each other those wonderful things that You see in us.” The we might be able to forgive each other those things that interfere with our communing together. It asked that the time that we are able to share in our

families may be more special; and “that we might be able to focus on You and remember all those times that You have blessed us as a family.”

Prayer was offered in behalf especially of the Akers family in which there have been so many physical problems of late. The prayer was that they might recognize the blessings that do come and especially that there shall be a blessing so great that there will be no doubt that it came from our Lord.

There was an expression of gratitude for having been called into the Kingdom. “We feel privileged and humbled by even being asked to be a part of that which you are accomplishing at this particular time.” There was a note of excitement that the Lord is moving so rapidly to make us what He has asked us to be - one with Him. The prayer was for forgiveness when we fail to measure up, to have our understanding enlarged and to have our love made like His for His Kingdom’s sake.

The final prayer was of humility, a feeling of unworthiness to approach the throne of God and of gratitude that God’s Son came and provided a way for us to come to Him. It was that His Spirit might make us a new heart and cleanse us, “to help us make daily choices to be His hands and feet. Help us to see and do what He would do that we might truly be one with Him and with each other.” Awareness of the upheaval in Christ’s church was expressed. “We know, Lord, that the powers of darkness are fighting hard against You. We humbly ask that Your angels will be sent to help us that we might not allow Your Spirit to be displaced out of our hearts, but that we might be knit together tightly in the bonds of love, that we might be valiant in testimony and endure all things, being willing to sacrifice for each other and being the light that You have called us to be. We acknowledge it can only be possible through Jesus. Our hope lies in Zion, and we humbly ask, Lord, that You use this generation to bring forth the Kingdom so that salvation might come and there might be a light so that people can see and be more able to choose between Your Kingdom and the kingdom of the adversary.” It ended with thanksgiving for prophecies, for all who have gone before and for The Father’s great, great love. “We honor You and praise You in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ”.

Testimonies Of Times We Have Felt As One

After singing, “We Are One In The Spirit, We Are One in The Lord.” we were invited to share testimony of any time in our lives when we had felt the power of the Spirit so greatly that we had felt we had been one with the Lord. We are looking to a time when we will be always one in the Spirit, but now we would like to hear if there has been any time in your life when you have felt one in the Spirit with a group of people under the influence of His Holy Spirit—a testimony of any opportunities you have had to just taste a little bit of what it will be like to do this all of the time.”

The first testimony was of the day before when the South Iowa group met to plan the fall retreat for this area. The group was excited and enthused over what is happening in the church! The one was there who was in charge of the service when Neil Simmons gave his message at Geneseo. He told of the joy of looking over the congregation and watching as the Spirit reached out and touched one person after another. For him it was a thrilling experience, and it was repeated in part as he was in the front when the subsequent message was given through Yvonne.

Mark Deiterick, who works on some of the committees of the Conference of Restoration Branches, reported that the budget for the Conference, including the \$150,000 allocated for missionary outreach, has already been met and he believes there will have to be

a special conference called in the next few months to care for items that need immediate attention because so many things are happening in the church. The one testifying expressed humility and thanksgiving for having been asked to be a part of the church at this exciting time.

A young mother spoke. “I remember when I was a kid crying on Mom’s lap. Somehow it had come up about what happens to the family when we die. Will Mom still be my Mom and will Dad still be my Dad? They were trying to explain to me that we might not have the same families that we have here. I couldn’t understand that, and I was devastated. How could I love anybody as much as I loved my parents and my family? I always struggled with that as a child. “Then I was at a Senior High camp one year. We were all standing in a circle one night holding hands. We had just been praying and we started singing. The Spirit of God was with us so strongly that I felt so much love! I didn’t know all of the kids very well, but I felt like I loved them as much as I loved my own family. They really were my brothers and my sisters. My love was so strong for them that, I still loved my family but I felt like God had finally shown me what His love was like - that it can encompass everyone. It was so strong that it was just a wonderful experience for me, and it kind of answered my childhood cares of what it was like to have God’s love so strongly that we could all love each other that much. I know when that happens again, we will care for everyone else as much as we care for ourselves and our family; and what great things will happen then!”

A teacher of Upward Bound told of a time this summer when he was having difficulty reaching his students. The morning before he had his class he prayed that the Lord would give him what He wanted him to say and that he would remember all of the things he wanted to say. “Things went really well. It was like I wasn’t even talking. It was like the Lord was putting words in my mouth, and I said everything that I wanted to cover.”

Later he was talking to a friend who quoted Martin Luther King’s speech which charged that whatever you do in life, whether you are a worker at McDonalds or a rocket scientist, you should do whatever you do to the best of your ability.

One person was missing from the congregation because she was not feeling well, but her husband said she was receiving rich ministry watching Matthew on a DVD. They also have the Gospel of John and the book of Acts on DVD. A Muslim young man has been helping put that on his IPOD, and his working with him “bore a little fruit this morning.” The young man is trying to convert him to the Muslim faith, “so I am listening to him, and he is going to read the part of the Book of Mormon where Jesus’ ministry is recorded.” He feels Jesus in the Book of Mormon really answers the need of Muslims if they will be open to Him. This young man said he would read it open-minded. “I am waiting to see this.” The speaker went to the internet a the young man’s request to see a testimony of a Christian minister who was converted to the Muslim faith. “I heard that man’s testimony. It wasn’t very good at all, but in the mail, unsolicited by me, came a testimony of a high Muslim who had been converted to Christ. I am not going to give that to him right away. I want him to read the Book of Mormon, first.” He expressed appreciation for the kindness of the young man and the fact that he has gone out of his way to help him. “I will just see what fruit it bears. And we won’t run out of missionary work because there are a lot of Muslims who will try to give the word to you if you ever let them.”

One spoke of a time when she felt close to Christ. Her memory

goes back to when she was a child lying on a rock praying that she really would have a church family; “and I just felt really close to God at that time. The times that I have really felt the closest were the times I was really excited about His word and about the spiritual world and I was talking to the youth, or maybe just like to you guys, and I felt like it wasn’t really me talking, but it was God talking. I don’t know how you get closer than that - if God talks through you.” She spoke of a friend, Eric Odida, with whom she felt she has a kind of bond that makes her feel, “just like I was a mother to him. I am so proud of him and I am so proud of Ron and Doug, too, and how they have reached out.” She expressed her belief that God wishes us all to feel a real connection like we are one with these new souls Christ is bringing into His church. “I know that the time is short. I think we need to look out and be more open.”

A final testimony was of one who said, “I feel like you are my family, too.” She told of how much she appreciated hearing the needs of the group when she is away at work, and she keeps everyone here in her prayers. Like a previous speaker, she said, “I can really relate to what Erin said, just wishing you could be closer to be with your brothers and sisters.” She uses the internet often to make connections with those with whom she can discuss things of the Kingdom. “When the Spirit of God is with somebody in their statement, I feel so close to that person.” She rejoices, knowing they are valiant in promoting the Lord whether or not they are of a Restoration faith. “I really believe prophecies are true, that there is going to be a complete separation of the righteous from the wicked, God is going to bring those who know Him together. We all need to strive to have that strong personal relationship with the Lord, because I think that is the solution. That is what will make us one.” Our Pastor closed the service with an expression of joy at having shared and a hope that we will continue to work toward being one by having God’s Spirit to guide, direct and pull us together in the Kingdom building enterprise.

We sang, “Forth in they name, oh Lord, we go.” and were dismissed with this benediction: “Our kind and loving Heavenly father, we do pray that our daily duties will grow into the Kingdom of Your Son. We ask especially that You be with us this week that You would guide and direct our thoughts and call us back to You from those things that would lead us away from Your Kingdom that we would be able to share in the righteousness, peace and joy of our relationships in our families, in our congregation, and with those that we meet in the world that we may truly stand as witnesses for You - that we will be known as Your people and that the kind of things that we do, the ways we speak and the actions we have in our lives will all be ones that will direct and guide and help others find You and Your way. We pray these things in the name of Your Son, Amen.”

The Kingdom of God - Purpose of Christ’s Ministry

Seventy Ronald Smith, just returned from East Africa, spoke August 20, 2006. He chose for his scripture Matthew 24:32 in the Inspired Version, verse 14 in the King James. Throughout his sermon Brother Smith gave references in both versions of the Bible

since those he was teaching in Africa often had only the King James version available. (In this report, we will generally give only the Inspired Version references. If any of our readers needs the King James references, they will be provided on request.) “And again, this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come, or the destruction of the wicked.”

It is a pleasure to be back home to share with you once again. It takes a little bit of getting used to. I have been in places where they announce the services to go from two o’clock to six o’clock. They start it whenever and end it usually at dark, about seven. I understand the constraints are different in this country and will try not to keep you here past 10 o’clock tonight! I will warn you that I was trying to write a report of this trip and it seemed to me that I wasn’t getting much of any place. There was just too much to write. I kept a little diary while I was there. It is just one of these little spiral bound notebooks, but I actually wrote on every page of it! So I decided I would just make a list with each name and a short description so I would remember who each one was. I ended up with 164 names, and I don’t have nearly all of those we talked with, so there were a lot of things that happened.

I want to show you first of all a little bit about where we were and what we did. (Ron moved to a very large and colorful map of Africa that he had projected on the big screen at the front of the room. After identifying the place of the continent with respect to the equator, etc., he pointed out Kenya, a country in East Africa about the size of Texas, and Uganda, just west of Kenya. To get back took about 57 hours of travel, counting our initial bus ride as well as waiting in airports. (Doug made the arrangements, but we did get cheap tickets.)

After a joyful reunion with the Odida family, we took a night bus to Kisumu, a city on Lake Victoria, the second largest fresh water lake in the world, in the area in which most of the church members live. It was then on to Uganda where we stayed in Mbale for two weeks. We retraced our steps back to Kisumu for a week of youth camp with side trips during the day, and then made our way to Mombasa, a Kenyan city on the Indian Ocean for our last weekend. From there we made our way back to Nairobi for the trip home. Eric has been taking missionary trips to Mombasa. It takes all night on the overnight bus from Nairobi. (With a more detailed map of Kenya, he showed us more details of their ministry there.) The Scripture we read was about the gospel of the Kingdom being preached in all the world. We found the Priesthood of Kenya so excited because every place they go, people keep begging them to come to a new place. They have been having trouble keeping up with the demand of people asking them to come and to teach them. They report that the situation has changed so much in the last ten years. You can find non-denominational Protestants everywhere. But people are looking for something more. They are looking for the gospel of the Kingdom - the gospel that was restored to the earth. And these Priesthood are just excited about taking it! I would like to share with you just some of the testimonies of life changes because that, I think, is the most significant thing that is happening. If the gospel means anything, it means that people who respond will have changes in their lives.

The Gospel of the Kingdom Grows in Africa

There was a youth camp for high school age for which Gary and Donna Hawley were the directors and Brian Mundy the Pastor. Lauren Smith, Breezy Mundy and Matt Dudley were young people who came along to be staff of the camp. Eric predicted there would

be 30 youth, maximum 40. There were 90, and they had to turn away all the ones who were under age, because they could have had lots more if they could have accepted them. They did have a whole bunch of twenty-somethings, a number of whom were already married.

Of the ninety, I believe there were about 30 who were baptized members of the church. Out of the other sixty, twenty nine were baptized on the next to the last day of the camp. I had never been to a baptismal service where there were 29 people baptized. Actually, there were 30 baptisms because one of them was not from the camp. He was the person at whose home Doug and I were staying. Matt Dudley is a Priest, and there were 5 Priests from Kenya and Uganda. The six of them each took one person out into the water and those six were baptized. Then they got six more, baptized them, and got six more. Altogether, counting the baptisms at camp, I was present at 52 baptisms, according to my count, and I think there was one more baptized at a service at which I was not in attendance. We also had about twenty five baptisms of the Holy Spirit, some of whom had been baptized earlier but had not yet received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

During the camp, we went to Awasi, to the home of Tom Okeyo's father, Dishon. I had the privilege of baptizing Dishon a couple of years ago. Since the time of his baptism, they started holding church services in his home. Calleb, a Priest from Ahero, goes to Awasi every Sunday. They have had 21 baptisms at Awasi. They had about 15 at the service on Sunday when Doug and I were there. Dishon Okeyo had built a little veranda on the front of his house. It is not quite as wide as one of these rows of seats here and the length of the house. That is where they hold their church services. Their neighbors have been baptized, and it was a thrill to go there and share with them.

They started with a testimony service. Almost all the adults shared a testimony. Many of them shared a song as well. Dishon does not speak English, so Calleb was our interpreter. This was the first time I had heard Dishon share his testimony. He said he was happy to praise the Lord, and happy to have the church there. He apologized a little for the veranda saying that one of these days they were hoping to have a building in which they could meet. But about his life, he said he was doing many, many things that were not according to the gospel. One of those things was drinking. Even after he was baptized, he still couldn't leave the alcohol. Then one night, he had a dream. When you get the translation it is not always clear exactly what happened, but I do know he had an experience with the Lord. He said, "Since that day, I have not touched a drop of the liquid." Tom informed me that his friends have tried to buy him liquor and get him to drink, but he has been really steadfast. He was sharing his joy at being able to be free. That was just one testimony, but it was a special one to me because of Dishon's life and his response to the gospel.

There was a young lady named Dorothy who came to the camp and was baptized. On the final day, she shared her testimony. She had had some difficulties with deciding whether she should be baptized again. Eric had taken her over to Lauren. Lauren had shared some of the scriptures with her and had answered her questions. So she was baptized and said that was the happiest day of her life!

For me, one of the sweetest moments occurred in Uganda, when I was privileged to baptize a lady named Robinah Mukimba. She is a wonderful person. She is on the city council. She is a midwife and works with all the hospitals. Every day she rides her

bicycle miles through the hills and back into the little villages, and she knows everybody.

The last day Eric and I were in Mbale last year, we went to the house of a different Robinah who was really, really sick. She was a widow with five children. She had a little restaurant - a little shack where they cooked the food, and a little table outside on the sidewalk. It was near some UN office buildings, and it was those people to whom she catered. She was deathly ill and was not able to go to work. When she was not at work, there was no income and therefore no food for the children. She was in desperate, desperate straits. (We take so many things for granted. We were a number of places where people died in childbirth or of diseases. The life expectancy there is about 45 now, or 42, not 70 or 80 as it is here.) Anyway, this lady was so weak that she was struggling just to sit up on the couch, and I told her not to try. She did manage to sit up anyway, and we administered to her and left. I heard later that she was healed, went back to work and was baptized. William Mwiri went over to visit in her home. That Robinah had her friend, Robinah Mukimba come to the house. She listened to the gospel and decided that she wanted to be baptized as well. So it was that Robinah Mukimba was baptized along with Stella, who was one of her tenants, and two others who will be really strong members for that area. We also blessed Stella's baby.

On the last evening of our visit to Mbale, Robinah Mukimba had invited us to her home for tea. We got there about dark and arrived at her door the same time she did - perfect timing. She was coming back from her rounds on her bicycle. She went in the door and started dancing and singing and clapping, praising the Lord. Her daughter joined her. They were just so joyful! I have never seen anything like it! We were having a good time! I had mentioned to William on the way over my one regret on this trip was that we had not seen the other Robinah. She had been at a funeral for the week. I said, "Everything else has been just perfect!" To my great surprise and delight, who should show up but the other Robinah! The ladies brought out a watermelon and some of the sweetest pineapple I have ever tasted and avocados and bananas. What a wonderful time it was! The gospel keeps growing because these people tell their friends and they bring their friends. They are sharing the good news and it is just an amazing thing!

Let me share one more testimony. This one was a kind of a mistake. On our first day out from Nairobi, we went to a baptismal service at Rakwara. There we met Rosemary who was the wife of one of the men who was baptized. Rosemary had wanted to be baptized too, but she had had a miscarriage earlier. The baby had died in the womb and had not been cleaned out, and she was really sick. She had gone to the hospital and they wanted to operate, but she said she wanted to be baptized before she was operated on. So she had come home for the purpose of being baptized, but she was too weak to get out of bed. She had not gotten out of bed for several days, so she couldn't go to the baptismal service. We had to walk for over half an hour to get down to the water, and she was too weak to make the trip. So we didn't have a chance to even meet her until after the baptismal service. We went to her home, and administered to her. In her case she didn't get up. She was deathly ill! We administered and left. The next day, we got a phone call from Eric. He was talking to Henry Ouma, who had brought us to Uganda and was supposed to stay with us there. Eric said, "Someone has died." Henry informed us sadly that Rosemary had died. A few minutes later, we got a call from Henry's brother who said to Henry, "Your mother has died." Henry's mother had died unexpectedly, so Henry

had to leave us.

I have to tell you, it was a kind of a low point in my trip. We still believed that Rosemary also had died, and that after we had administered to her. That evening we had a chance to talk with Henry about life after death, and to share the scriptures and the understanding that we have. He left in the morning to bury his mother. The good news is that on the next to the last day that we were in Kenya, we were talking to Eric about it, and Eric said, "Oh no! Rosemary lived! In fact, she got up and asked for tea for the first time in days. She's not perfectly well yet, but she was telling everybody that she was healed."

As it turned out, our misunderstanding was a cultural thing. Eric didn't want to break the news to Henry that his mother had died, but he wanted to soften the blow so he said, "Someone has died." That was to start the grieving process, and then his brother was going to call and tell us it was his mother who had died. Henry put the two things together and told us that Rosemary had died. We learned a little bit about culture and other things as well. Later we had a chance to share with Henry again and his wife, Karen and had just a wonderful time in their home.

We Share the Gospel of the Kingdom In Scripture

What I would like to do with my last few minutes here is to turn from the testimonies to the things that we have been teaching, and I would like to share with you the gospel of the Kingdom. I know that many of you have heard me talk about the kingdom before, but sometimes, when you are out speaking about things, you get insights that you haven't had before. I don't know how long it has been since you have had an opportunity to hear some of this, and maybe it will do some good.

I think we have got something exciting to talk about when we talk about the Kingdom of God. I usually start with the affirmation that I believe with all my heart that if we will feast on the words of Christ, the words of Christ will tell us all the things that we should do. Of course, most of you recognize that's from Second Nephi 14:4 in the Book of Mormon. If I am speaking to a church group I usually give them the reference, and if I am speaking to a non-church group, I just tell them that's what I believe, and we start there. I am not shy about talking about the Book of Mormon, but since most of them don't have books of Mormon yet, I usually reserve that until the time when we have the Book of Mormon open and can talk about the promises that are there and the story of Christ. I start with the affirmation that I believe if we will feast on the words of Christ, the words of Christ will tell us all things that we should do.

Get your Bibles out, and let's "feast" a little bit here. The way you feast on words is by reading them, isn't it, and thinking about them and sharing with them? Let's look up Luke, 4:23. (The traveling microphone was put into service and various people in the congregation read the designated passages. Young Sam Jordison was the first to read.)

"But he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, for therefore am I sent." This was Jesus who was speaking, and he was in a little town, a town that was smaller than Mount Ayr. He was healing the people, He was teaching them, and He was doing miracles. When it came time for Him to leave, everybody said, "Oh, No! Don't leave! You have got to stay with us." This was His answer. He said, "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, because that's why I was sent." Now, you don't find many scriptures in the Bible where Jesus says, "This is why I was sent." But here is Jesus Himself saying, "This is the most important thing, to preach the Kingdom of God to other cities also."

Skip over to the eighth chapter of Luke, verse 1: "And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God; and the twelve who were ordained of him, were with him," This says Jesus was preaching what when He went to every city and village? The glad tidings of what? (Everybody can say it.) "The Kingdom of God." Jesus had those twelve with Him and He was teaching them what to say when they went out.

In chapter nine, He gives the twelve their special instruction. Read verses 1 and 2.: "Then he called his twelve disciples together, and he gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick." When He sent the twelve out, what did He tell them to preach? "The Kingdom of God!" And also to heal the sick, and those go together quite often.

Now, besides the Twelve, He had some other people that He sent out, and those were the Seventy. In Chapter 10 you will find His instructions to the Seventy. Read Verses 8 and 9: "And into whatsoever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you; and heal the sick that are therein, and say, The Kingdom of God has come nigh unto you." So what were the Seventy supposed to preach about? "The Kingdom of God!" And heal the sick. And so, since I am a Seventy, this is very important to me. We go in and we eat what is set before us. If people ask us what we are doing, we say, "We are preaching the Kingdom of God, and healing the sick."

Pray For The Kingdom to Come

The Disciples of Jesus found that when He prayed, powerful things happened, and they wanted to know how to pray that way. And so they took Him aside and said, "Teach us to pray." In chapter 11 of Luke, you find where they asked how to pray. Most of you know the prayer that Jesus taught them. We generally know it from Matthew as opposed to the one from Luke, but let's just start that prayer all together, and this is what Jesus taught His disciples to pray. If you are reading it from Luke, it starts in verse 2, and it says, "When you pray, say: "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The words are slightly different here, but it is the same prayer. Now, what's the first thing that Jesus tells His disciples to pray about? "The Kingdom of God!" Yes and He says to pray that the Kingdom will come. He is not asking them to pray that we will all die really quickly so we can get into the Kingdom. Right? That's not what He is saying. He is saying that the Kingdom will come - that His will will be done on the earth even as it is in heaven.

Do you know God's will is done in heaven? Every planet, every star, the sun, moon - everything in the heavens does God's will. The only place where God's will is not done is right here on the earth. And if God's will were done on the earth, there would be no more war. There would be no rich and no poor. There would be no sickness. Do you know how I know that? Because He tells us what His will is in the scripture. He tells us He doesn't want any contention. He doesn't want any fighting. He doesn't want any whoredoms. He doesn't want anybody to be hurt. He doesn't want drunkenness. He doesn't want a lot of those things that we get ourselves into. And He says, "Pray that the Kingdom will come to the earth - that His will will be done on the earth." That is the most important thing. Before you pray for your daily bread, before you ask for the things that you need, before you pray for forgiveness of sins even, He says to pray that His Kingdom will come. Would you like that? Would you like His Kingdom to be here on the earth? You

can start praying about it today!

In chapter 12, Jesus gives more instructions to His disciples. Read verses 34 and 35. "Therefore seek ye to bring forth the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." God is there waiting to give you the Kingdom. Did you know that? He wants to give it to you, and He says if you will seek first to build up the Kingdom of God, the things of the earth will be added to you - the things that you need - the food, the clothing the shelter will be added to you. He is waiting to give you the Kingdom! In the 13th chapter, verses 18 and 19 we find Jesus speaking in parables. A parable is a little story that has a meaning. You can listen to it on two different levels. you can hear it on the story level, or you can listen to what it means - what it is trying to get across: "Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it." Can anybody tell me what that parable is about? Jesus said it is about the Kingdom of God." Now some people will tell you it is about a little seed that you planted and it grew up and united earth and heaven and even the birds of the air made their nests there. But if you want to understand what Jesus was talking about, He was talking about the Kingdom of God. Right? He says, "To what shall I liken the Kingdom of God? It's like this little tiny seed that a man took and cast in garden, and it grew up to be a great tree."

Verses 20 and 21: And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the Kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." And what's this parable about? The Kingdom of God, isn't it? And the woman I believe represents the church. The church takes and hides something in people's lives and it grows, and it's like the Holy Spirit that's like the wind, you know. You put this little yeast in the loaf and it rises up and becomes good. That's what makes it great. So Jesus told all kinds of stories about the Kingdom of God and what was going to happen. Let's skip over to Luke 17:20-21: "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them, and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; Neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, Lo, there! For, behold, the kingdom of God has already come unto you." The Pharisees were the leaders of the church in Jesus' day. They had a problem with Jesus and His teaching. The Pharisees believed that anyone who was a descendant of Abraham who followed the law of Moses was a part of the Kingdom of God. So the Pharisees were very strict. You have got to follow the Law! That's what makes you a part of the Kingdom. Then along came John the Baptist and Jesus. John the Baptist declared, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" Jesus came along saying, "Repent every one of you, and be baptized, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" They were saying to the Pharisees and the other Jews, "You are not a part of the Kingdom! You are not a part of the Kingdom just because you are the children of Abraham. Just because you follow the Law doesn't make you a part of the Kingdom. You have to repent and you have got to be baptized in order to be a part of the Kingdom. And they didn't like that at all! So they came to Jesus, figuratively grabbed Him by the throat and said, "When is the Kingdom of Heaven going to come?"

And Jesus said, "The Kingdom isn't something you will observe. It doesn't come with observation. You don't say, "Look. Here it is." or "There it is.", because the Kingdom has already come unto

you." In other versions it says, "The Kingdom is within you."

The words of Christ are full of the kingdom of God, and I m not going to have time to read everything. Hopefully by now you have begun to see that there is a kind of a pattern here. Jesus is sent to preach the Kingdom. He teaches the Twelve to go out and preach the Kingdom. He tells the Seventy to go out and preach the Kingdom. He tells His disciples to pray for the Kingdom. He tells them to seek first to build up the Kingdom, and even the Pharisees got the message, although they didn't believe it; and when they finally killed Him, you will find in Luke 23:39 it says, "And the superscription was written over him, in letters if Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

Now, why would they accuse Him of being the King of the Jews? Because He was preaching the Kingdom, folks. This is what He died for! He said, "This is why I came." at the very beginning and He said, "This is why I died!" at the end.

In the third chapter of John, if you just keep reading on, you find that one of the Pharisees came to Jesus by night - Nicodemus. He asked Jesus, "How do you get into the Kingdom?" We don't really have Nicodemus' question, but we have Jesus' answer. Read John 3:3: "Jesus answered and said unto Him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." So He told Nicodemus that he had to be born again if he wanted to be in the Kingdom, even if he was a Pharisee - even if he was a master in Israel. Nicodemus was one of the Sanhedrin - one of the Seventy Elders who were over the church. Even if he was a ruler in Israel, he would have to be born again if he was going to be part of the Kingdom.

So Nicodemus said, "How can a man be born again when he is old? Can he enter again into his mother's womb and be born?" "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." So Jesus talks to him about baptism here. He says you need to be baptized in the water and you need to be baptized in the Spirit - be born again - in order to enter into the Kingdom of God. And the reason I believe that He is talking about baptism here is that John, immediately after he finishes the story of Nicodemus, down in verse 23, says, "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized;" Do you hear that? Jesus was baptizing. Verse 27, says, "And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he who was with there beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold the same baptizeth, and he receiveth of all people who come unto him."

So the story of the third chapter of John is about getting into the Kingdom, and it is talking about baptism. It is talking about how Jesus baptized, and we can do a little bit more on that. Some of the Protestants get a little hung up on John 4: 1 and 2, which talk again about Jesus baptizing. In the King James it says, "Jesus baptized not, but his disciples." Many Protestants end the sentence right after "not" and say Jesus didn't really baptize; even though twice just before it has already been said that he did and even at the beginning of this chapter it says that he did. It reads a little bit different in the King James, but we don't have to quibble about any of that stuff about Jesus baptizing because that was Jesus' answer to Nicodemus, and that's how you get into the kingdom.

Listen to the command that Jesus gave at the very end of His tenure with His disciples. You can find this in Matthew the 28th chapter, starting with verse 17 to the end of the chapter: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptiz-

ing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, unto the end of the world. Amen." So Jesus came because He wanted to preach the Kingdom of God, and when He gave His disciples His last command, what did He tell them to do when they went to all the nations of the earth? He told them to baptize them. Why do you suppose He told them to baptize them? Sam Jordison answered, "So they could get into the Kingdom of God." That's exactly right, and they need to observe the things which He has commanded them. That's what being a part of the Kingdom is all about. You listen to the King! If you don't listen to the King, you are an outlaw. Right? And you are not a part of the Kingdom. But if you listen to the King, then you are a part of the kingdom, and Jesus says, "Be baptized so you can get in."

The Apostles Preach the Kingdom

Let's see how the disciples carried this out. Let's go over to Acts. Both Acts and Luke were written by the same person. They were originally written as letters to Luke's friend, Theophilus, to explain the whole story of Jesus. In Acts 1:1, Luke says that his former letter, which we call the book of Luke, contains the story of Jesus until the time of his ascension into heaven, and that this letter will tell the story about apostles, "To whom also he showed himself alive after his sufferings by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God;" So, when Jesus had forty days to speak to his disciples, what did he speak to them about? The kingdom of God, of course. If Jesus were here today to speak to you, do you know what I think he would talk to you about? "The Kingdom of God." Now let us turn to Acts 2:38-39. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

This is the story of the day of Pentecost. Jews came from many nations to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast at Pentecost. When Peter and the other apostles began to speak to them, everyone heard in his own language. They were surprised. It got their attention, and Peter was able to convince them that Jesus was the son of God. But they had killed Jesus, and so they were very sorry. Their hearts ached because of it, and they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter told them to repent and be baptized and receive the Holy Ghost. Now why do you think that Peter would tell them to do this? "In order to enter the Kingdom of God," said Sam. Exactly!

Now turn to the eighth chapter of Acts. This is the story of Philip preaching in Samaria. Now these were not Jews, but Philip went to preach there anyway. He was healing the sick and casting out devils, and doing many miracles. We are told that there was much joy in that city. Read verse 12 to find out what the people did when they believed Philip. Acts 8: 12: "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." Notice what Philip was preaching~the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus". After he told them who Jesus was, he gave them the message Jesus told them to give. And then what did they do? They were baptized.

The story continues in verses 14-17: "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John; Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy

Ghost. (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost." Here we see that people who had experienced the miraculous power of the Holy Ghost still were baptized in water, and hands were laid on their heads to give the gift of the Holy Ghost. And why did they do this? So they could be part of the Kingdom of God.

Now turn to Acts 19:1-8. "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

" When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve. And he (Paul) went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God." Note what Paul was preaching - the Kingdom of God. Note also what these disciples did when they heard his preaching. They had been baptized with the baptism of John. There is nothing wrong with John's baptism. Jesus himself was baptized by John to fulfill all righteousness. But when they heard about the gift of the Holy Ghost, they were baptized again, in the name of Jesus, and Paul laid his hands on them to give the gift of the Holy Ghost. That is how it is done, brothers and sisters. This is the way to enter the kingdom of God.

We have time for one final scripture today. Lets us read the last two verses of the book of Acts, Acts 28:30-31: "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him." So what was it that Paul did for the last two years of his life? He preached the Kingdom of God.

Jesus, the 12, the 70, Peter, Philip, and Paul, from the beginning of Luke to the end of Acts, all preached the kingdom of God. Jesus said this same gospel of the kingdom would be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations, and then the end would come. Today this prophecy is being fulfilled in your ears. May God bless you all.

Salvation Christ's Way

Elder Douglas Smith of Higginsville, Missouri, recently returned from a mission to Kenya and Uganda, East Africa, where he ministered with Seventy Ronald Smith, spoke at the August 27, 2006 service at Mt. Ayr. His opening scripture was Isaiah 12:2-5: "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done excellent things; this is known in all the earth."

Elder Smith's wife and oldest son and daughter joined him to

sing, "Helen's Song". Helen is a teenage Kenyan girl who was just baptized during the recent youth retreat in Kenya. She wrote the song and gave it to the missionaries on a previous mission. Her song declares, "I love You Lord, more than words can ever tell. And I know You see in through the depths of my heart well. I love You, Lord. there's no other love like Yours, and I only came to say, "I love You, Lord." After the song, Douglas resumed speaking.

I also would like to read a scripture from Isaiah 64:4-5. "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him. Thou meetest him that worketh righteousness, and rejoiceth him that remembereth thee in thy ways; in righteousness there is continuance, and such shall be saved." This morning I would like to share with you some of the excellent things that the Lord has done in the world. We just recently got back from Uganda and Kenya and saw the Lord working in ways that we couldn't dream of.

When we first got to Uganda, we met with the Priest who is there. His name is William Wiri, and William said, "We need to have a prayer". We said, "What shall we pray for?" And he said, "We need to pray for two things. We need to pray that the Lord is going to bring strong members into the church - those who have needs, but the ones who will be really working for the work. And the second thing we need to pray for is that God is going to exceed all of our expectations." So we prayed for those things and the Lord did both.

We were going up to Makambo, which is one of the places where William is leading. There was a man, whose name is Lucius, who wanted us to come to his place before we went up there. So we went over to Lucius' house and found the reason he wanted us to come there is because none of his neighbors are Christian. None of his neighbors have any thought of God at all. They are all called pagans or heathens or whatever, and Lucius wanted us to share with them about the Lord.

It's a little bit different there because a lot of times you go places and say, "Let's look in the Bible and see what the Bible says about this or that, but these people didn't have any concept of the Bible, even; so it was starting from ground zero of, "Something made the world. Something has put all of this stuff together and has put you here, and what do you think that is?" So we shared with them for a couple of hours anyway, and after the sharing, we asked if there were any who needed healings. Several of the people asked for administration. We administered to those people and went on up to Makambo.

The next morning as we were meeting with the saints in Makambo, three of the ladies we had seen down at Lucius' place the night before had come all the way up the hill to Makambo. The people asked them, "Who are you and what are you doing here?" They said, "We are from down the hill. We are here because we like the way that these men speak. And we like the way these men pray; because yesterday they prayed for us and we were healed. So we have come up to hear more about what they have to say."

One day when we were at William's house, a young man named Nicanori came in and said, "There are some people we have to go see today." We said, "Okay, if we can." He said they are not so far away that we can't. We need to visit them in Mbale." We all made a little caravan over to their house. It was the home of Charles and his wife Amina. Nicanori told us that Amina was very sick and needed to have prayers. He had just met Charles, who was a friend of his from back sometime. He had met him in town and had heard

that his wife was sick, so asked if we could come over. Charles said, "Yes". Charles wasn't of any particular persuasion so far as religion was concerned and, in fact, wasn't that interested in religion. He was a quite successful business man. The house that they lived in was a very nice house. He was working in Nairobi and they had one of those very nice places with the big walls with broken glass around the top. We went inside the house and met Amina and the rest of the family. The obvious problem that she was having was that she was paralyzed on her left side. She was a very young woman and something had happened to her that made it so she could not move her left side. Her husband was very concerned about her. They had already been to the doctors. She had been in the hospital for several months and nothing had happened, so they had just sent her home. So, after sharing with them for quite a little while we talked to them about the fact that the Bible said you could call for the Elders of the church, they would anoint you with oil and pray over you and that prayer of faith would save the sick. We asked Amina if she would like to have that kind of prayer. She said, "Yes".

William is a Priest. He prayed first. Then Ron and I administered to her. But, you know, during that administration prayer it was interesting that we were led to pray that that which was causing the problem would be cast out. After the prayer, the Spirit was there in such power that both Ron and I really wanted her to lift up her left hand and shake it, and say, "Goodbye", but she didn't move her hand. Her fingers were moving as we left.

We had some other appointments that day. When we came back the next day, Nicanori came back over and he was really excited. He said, "I have just seen Charles, and he told me, "The Lord has done something great in my house!" Nicanori said, "Oh, is Amina well?" Charles said, "Amina is just fine, but the blessing that she got wasn't what you asked." You see, ever since Charles and Amina had been married, Amina had not been able to sleep at night. Every night, Charles said, she would have an attack and she would wake up screaming with nightmares. It wasn't something that just happened occasionally. It was something that happened every night since they had been married. But after the prayer that day, Amina got the first night's sleep of their married life, and Charles said, "We want to be baptized." We didn't have more time to share with them, but Charles is in Nairobi, and we know a very good Elder there by the name of Eric Odida, and we are sicking Eric onto Charles. I am sure the family will be blessed because of it.

As we shared with William about healing and about administration and all, we talked to him about how the administration is limited to the Elders. That is because the Lord says that not only will their prayer heal, but that also the sins of those for whom they pray can be forgiven. The remission and forgiveness of sins is a Melchisedec function. But, we said, "You don't necessarily have to be an Elder to pray for somebody." (You remember that William is not an Elder). William says, "I know that." He said, "There was a man that I grew up with in my village. He was a very good friend. The only thing was that he was becoming quite successful and he told me that he was too good for Christianity." In fact, he told William when he became a Christian he was silly to believe in Christ. (William was not a Christian initially and actually had quite an experience in being disinherited because of his willingness to become Christian. The people around his village, as his father told him, said, "That western religion is just for white people. That is not for us. That is not what we are. We don't believe in those things.") William kept trying to talk to his friend about the Lord, and finally his friend said, "William, don't talk to me at all -

don't talk to my family - if all you are going to talk about is Jesus Christ, because we don't want to hear." So William would wave and say, "Hello" but other than that would not speak to this man because he really had nothing to say except about Jesus Christ.

But after some years, the man came to William one day and William said that he was very humble, and asked, "William, what is all this Christianity stuff? What's it all about?" So William began to share about the Lord and what he could do to his life. They even had prayer together and the man asked the Lord that He would be able to work in his life, too. After they had finished, he turned to William with tears in his eyes and said, "William, I am sick! And he began to waste away. William said it was like he was melting He got very thin and very ill and William said, "You need to go and get tested for AIDS." He said, "I'm afraid to go and get tested because I haven't been faithful to my wife. I have had a girl friend in the city where I have been working, and I am very afraid." William urged him to go find out. He was tested, and sure enough he was positive for AIDS. When he found out that he had AIDS, he came back to William and asked, "Can God cure AIDS?" William assured him that God could. He said, "William, will you pray for me?" So William didn't anoint him with oil and didn't lay his hands on his head, but he grabbed hold of him and prayed for him.

William didn't see him for about three months, but the next time he saw him, his friend said to him, "I'm getting stronger." And in fact, he said, "I am getting thicker." And William said you could see that he was - that the skinniness, "melting" that had been going on before had been reversed and he was getting stronger all of the time. And William said, "Then you need to go and get tested again." So the man went back and was tested again. This time he was HIV negative. That man's wife was one of those who was baptized when we were there. His children are some of the strongest members that they have in the church at Umbali. and what a blessing it is that the Lord does have the power to heal.

Salvation - The Reason God Heals

But you know, as I read there in Isaiah chapter 12, it said, "for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he is also become my salvation." God is our strength. He can do wonderful things and His power is shown through all the world, but you know, God shows His strength for a reason. We go over to the book of Luke, chapter 5:23-25. This is the story of when men had brought the man who was sick and had opened up the roof and lowered him down. It was on a Sabbath day when Jesus was preaching and he had said to the man, "Your sins are forgiven you." The Pharisees got all upset about that and questioned, "How can you be doing that?" And Jesus said, "Does it require more power to forgive sins than to make the sick rise up and walk? But, that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, I said it. And he said unto the sick of the palsy, I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thy house. And immediately he took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God."

You see, Jesus said, the reason that He healed - the reason that He showed His power in healing - was so that people would know that He had the power to forgive their sins - so that we would know that He has the power to save us. And that is one of the important things that the Restored Gospel does for us. It gives us an understanding of what it means to have salvation.

We were up at Namisissio, at William's home place. While we were there, one of the questions that came up among the people, who were essentially of Protestant persuasion, was "Why is it that people who are saved don't change? We have people who come and get

saved, but then nothing is different in their lives. Why is that?" We were able to turn to the scriptures and to share with them what the Lord has told us in His scriptures about salvation. You know, when we are talking about things that are important in the world - important in our lives - there is probably nothing more important than the salvation that the Lord offers because He said that's what He wants for us. He wants us to be saved. He wants us to drink out of the wells the water of salvation. He wants us to have that salvation and to have it so much a part of our lives that it is like water to us - something that we drink into our souls every day. So we were able to go and look in the scriptures.

In Second Timothy, Paul tells Timothy, "You need to use all of the scriptures." He says all Scripture that is given by God is given so we can use it for reproof and correction - so that we can understand how it is that we can become perfected - how it is that we can be those who can do the work of God. And so we began to look in the scriptures to see what it means and how it can come about that we can have salvation.

One scripture that a lot of people know is Romans 10:9-13. Romans 10, verse nine says, "... if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Sounds pretty clear, doesn't it? Pretty easy. It lays it all right there. Confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, and you will be saved.

But it gets a little more tricky if you go ahead and read the next verse. Verse ten says, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." So it's not just a matter of believing, but it's believing unto righteousness. In other words, a belief that makes a change inside of you. And if we keep on reading, down in verse 13, it says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Well, which one is it? Is it belief? Is it righteousness? Is it calling on the name of the Lord? Is it confession?

Well, we can make it even more confusing if we go over to the book of Mark, Chapter 16:14-15. Here Jesus says, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." So now we throw something else in there. The Lord says that we have to believe and be baptized to be saved.

Let's make it even more confusing. Let's go over to the book of Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; but it is the gift of God; Not of works, lest any man should boast." There it says you don't have to do anything. It's a gift of faith from God and it's His grace, and you are saved and you can't do anything.

Well, let's make it even more confusing. Let's go over to Matthew 24:11. Matthew 24:11 says, "But he that remaineth steadfast, and is not overcome, the same shall be saved." So we are left with a question here. We have all these scriptures, and they all seem to contradict each other; so we have three choices. One is that the Bible is crazy. It can't decide what's right. It says all kinds of things. It contradicts itself. Therefore, it is all of man and needs to be thrown out. I think that is a bad choice.

The second choice is that you can say, "This is too confusing. I know what I am going to do. I'm going to choose one of those scriptures. That's the one I am going to believe, and I am going to ignore the rest of the scriptures. That's what a lot of people do, and that's why we have so many churches around. One church picks

and says, "It's confession that does it. You confess Jesus Christ, and you are saved. That's what we are going to believe, and we will fight to the death for that belief."

The next people says, "No! No! It's baptism. If you get baptized you will be saved. That's why we have to do it while they are little children, little babies, because we don't want to miss anybody. So baptism is the important thing, and we will fight to the death on that one."

But other people say, "No! No! It's grace. It's faith. It's nothing that we do. It's something that God does to us - nothing that we have a part of." And that's what they believe.

So the second choice is to pick one scripture and say, "This is the one that's true." and ignore all the rest. I don't think that's a very good idea either, because God said, "I gave you all scripture that is given so you can use it for correction and to know what the right way is". So there has got to be a third way. And the third way is, they all must be true!.

How can that be? It sounds so clear and so hard set in those scriptures. Well, the best way I know to describe that is from a little story. There is a story we like to use wherever we are in Africa, so I will change it to make it here. So we will say that there was a man who lived in Mt. Ayr. His son went off to college at Graceland University. While his son was gone, the man decided to dig a well. They started digging but had not really finished the well. The hole was there, and they forgot to cover it up one night. That happened to be the night that his son came back from university to visit the home. As he walked into the place, he didn't know that the hole was there, and he fell down the well.

Now he was down in this large hole. It was wet, and it was muddy and it was dirty. The walls were all slick and he couldn't find his way out. He couldn't climb - couldn't get out of there. The son knew that if he stayed down in the bottom of that well with no food, he was going to die. But he remembered his father. He knew his father was inside the house, and he knew if he called to his father, his father wouldn't leave him down there in that well to die. So he called out, "Father, help me!" The father, inside the house, heard his son, came out, found him down in the bottom of the well. When the father looked over the top of the well, the son yelled out, "I'm saved!" because he knew his father was going to get him out of this hole.

The father said, "Yes son. Let me help you. I'm going to get something." And he went and got a rope. He threw the rope down to his son and said, "Son, I need to have you do some things if I am going to get you out of this well. I need to have you tie that rope around you really tight so there is a connection between you and me so I can help you. Then I want you to hold onto the rope tightly. And I want you to start walking up the side of the well. I'll pull from the top and you walk up from the bottom. Eventually we will get you out of that well." So, when the father threw the rope down, the son gladly tied the rope around himself and said, "I'm saved!" and started walking up the side of the well. Through the process of time, as the father pulled and the son walked, he indeed was out of the well.

We can see the spiritual analogy pretty easily. The Lord tells us that all of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All of us are down in a well that we can't get out of. There is nothing we can do about the sin we have done in our life, but we can be sure that that sin separates us from God. And the Lord doesn't want us to die that way; and so he says, "If you will call upon me, I will save you!" So we have to have faith, number one, that the Lord is there and, number two, that the Lord will answer us when we call. And so, we don't just have faith. We also have to do the calling.

So we call upon the name of the Lord and ask Him to save us. And the Lord says, "Yes! I certainly will, but there is something we need to do. We need to make a connection. There has to be something that I am going to give you - something that is undeserved - something that you couldn't do anything to ever deserve. I am going to send My Son, Jesus. He is going to come and He is going to die for you. He is going to take the spiritual consequences of all the sins that you will ever commit so that you won't have to have that punishment. This is because of My grace." And so He throws us the rope, which is Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one can come to the Father but by me." There is no way that we can get up out of that well without that rope - the grace of the Lord shown to us in Jesus Christ.

But then God says, "We have still got to get connected. I have still got to be a part of your life, and He says, "Let me give you a commandment. I want you to be baptized." And why does He want us to be baptized? We go over to Acts 2:38-39. We read about the day of Pentecost when all the people believed in Jesus, and when they did, they asked the Apostles what they should do, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." So the Lord said, "You need to be baptized. You need to make a covenant with me. If you will do that, then you will receive a remission of your sins, and you will also receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit." You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit being inside of you. A part of the very nature of God will now reside within you. And this is a connection that can't be broken. This way that rope is being tied onto you tight. It's a part of God - His Holy Spirit that now dwells inside of you and brings you to Him. You see there is nothing that you can do that would make God not want you to come to Him. He loves you wherever you are - whatever sin you have in your life - whatever things you have done to hurt other people - whatever things you have done to hurt yourself! It doesn't matter. God loves you right where you are, but He loves you too much to leave you there. Do you think He wants you to stay where your sins cause pain and sorrow? Do you think He wants you to continually be guilty? Do you think He wants you to continue to hurt other people - to have sadness in your life? No! He loves you no matter what, but He doesn't want to keep you there. He wants you to be a part of His Kingdom! He wants you to have an abundant life - a life that is free of those things that cause that trouble. So He gives you His Spirit so that Spirit can strengthen you to keep the covenant that you made in baptism that you will remember Him, take His name, and keep the commandments that He has given you. So with that Holy Spirit in your life, you begin to climb out of the well. You get rid of things that are causing you pain and causing you to be separated from God. He continues to pull, and you continue to walk until finally you are going to be saved. You are going to be a part of His Kingdom. with all of those things out of your life. He says, "You are going to be perfected! You are going to be sanctified!" And that's what His will is in your life - that you be born again.

Why does He want you to be born again? So you can be saved in His Kingdom, because if you are not born again, you can't even see the Kingdom. There is a reason for being born again. It's so that you can start a new life. When a baby is born, he doesn't start teaching mathematics right away. He doesn't go and start doing surgery at the hospitals right away. He begins to learn and grow. New things come into his life. And that's what our experience is in

being born again with God. We begin as a baby and we begin to grow. New things come into our lives and we become the people that the Lord wants us to be,

And that, my friends, is the good news of the Restored gospel - that the possibility, the authority of baptism has been restored to the earth - that we can, indeed, have that promise that the Lord has given that we can have a baptism for the remission of our sins - that we can have hands laid upon us so that we can receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, so that we can be a part of His Kingdom, and the Lord can change our lives.

Jesus made it so clear in Matthew chapter 7 that it's not just a matter of saying, "Lord, Lord" or trying to confess His name that brings us to the Kingdom. Matthew 7:30-33 says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, it is not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, that shall enter unto the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. For the day soon cometh, that men shall come before me to judgment, to be judged according to their works. And many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name; and in thy name cast out devils; and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I say, Ye never knew me; depart from me ye that work iniquity" How can Jesus say to people that call Him "Lord, Lord" and that do wonderful things in His name, "Depart from me"? They pray and things happen and miracles are performed How can He say to them, "You never knew me." What does it mean to know the Lord?

Conveniently, there's a definition of knowing the Lord given to us in First John 2:3. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." Wow!" "Depart from me ye that work iniquity" What was the problem with those people? They weren't keeping the commandments. They weren't a part of His kingdom. Jesus wasn't really their King. In Luke 6:46 He says, "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Back to First John 2:4-5: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby we know that we are in him." Do you see what's going to happen? If you keep the commandments, His love is going to be perfected in you. The result of what He is trying to do - the reason that He sent Jesus to you - is going to be fulfilled. That's why He says that if we say we know Him but we don't keep His commandments, then we are liars, and liars aren't going to be in the Kingdom.

In the Book of Mormon, Third Nephi 12:29-35, when Jesus was talking to the people there, He lays this all out very easily. Verse 29 says, "And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name, shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father, at that day when I shall stand to judge the world." And in verses 31-35, "And for this cause he fulfilleth the words which he hath given, and he lieth not, but fulfilleth all his words; and no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; Therefore nothing entereth into his rest, save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end. Now this is the commandment, Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.

"Verily, verily I say unto you, This is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do, that shall ye also do; For that which ye have seen me do, even that shall ye do; therefore if ye do these things, blessed are ye,

for ye shall be lifted up at the last day."

That's what this gospel gives us. It is the assurance that we will be lifted up at the last day as we continue to let the Lord work in our lives, as we endure to the end! And that's why it is so precious. That's why I love it so much! Because this is a different message than you are going to hear anywhere else in the Christian world. And the Lord is bringing people to that message every single day.

More People The Lord Has Brought

When we were in Uganda, we met a young lady whose name is Milicah. Milicah has a wonderful testimony. She was a young lady who was just of college age. She had been living in Compala where she was attending church with some friends, and the people there were very excited that Milicah should be saved. They kept telling her she should be saved. She wasn't sure, and they were the kind of people that were almost militantly insistent that she be saved, and she was becoming very uncomfortable. So she decided to pray about it; and while she was praying one night she had a vision. A personage, surrounded by light, appeared to her, sat by her bed and told her that if she would wait to be saved, the Lord would take care of every earthly thing in her life.

So Milicah resisted those who wanted her to just go and confess and be saved, because she said, "The Lord has something more for me." She had an opportunity to go to Kampala to go to computer school. The problem was, she didn't have a place to stay. The Pastor at the church she was attending knew William Wirie from his former life, and he called William and said, "Would it be all right if a young lady would come and stay because she needs a place to live?" William said, "Sure, that would be fine." And so Milicah came to stay at William's house. There she heard the Restored Gospel. She said she knew it was what the angel had told her to wait for because it was the fulness of the gospel. So Milicah was baptized.

Another man whom we met and with whom we worked there was named Henry Ouma. Henry is from Busia, which is just on the border of Kenya and Uganda. Henry had quite an interesting story. He was a Pastor, actually, in a church there in Kampala - a fairly large church. His father was a man named Gideon who lived in a place called Rakwara. The last time that I was in Kenya, I was able to go to Rakwara and just share with the people there. We didn't have any members there, but there were several people who were interested in hearing about the gospel; so we had gone to Rakwara. They had set out some benches underneath a tree, and we probably had about thirty or thirty five people. Almost the whole village had all come and we had people of all kinds of faiths. We shared with them for a whole day. Micah Bates was there, and Eric and I and Joseph Ochieng. At the end of that day, there was a man there whose name was Gideon. Gideon was very excited about the gospel.

Gideon also was a polygamist. He was not able to be baptized because of his polygamy, but he was so excited about the gospel that he called his sons and said, "You have got to hear this gospel!" Henry was one of Gideon's sons. So Henry had actually invited Eric to come to his home and to share with him. Eric shared with him and he went back to Nairobi and shared with Eric there for awhile. Then he came back and said, "This gospel is true." He was baptized and he gave up his job as a Pastor.

You know, it's easy to say that here, but it's not so easy there because that was his livelihood. And in a country with 70% unemployment, to say, "This means so much to me that I am going to give up my job, and I am not going to have any prospect of having another job any time soon." is really a big thing! One of the things that Tom Nyawiri, one of the Elders who was at the camp that we had, said one

day was, "You know, this gospel is what we live by, because if we don't have the gospel, we have got nothing! We are going to die!" Do we have anything else to live for besides the gospel? Are we going to be okay if we don't have the gospel in our lives any more? "William said "No!" And Henry said "No!"

So Henry began a group to try to teach people about the gospel as he learned more about it himself. While we were there he had several groups of people come in and we went over to some people's houses to share with them in their homes. The last day we were there, his old Pastor came by the house and wanted to give Henry one more chance. He said, "Henry, why don't you just come back? You could have your old job back and you could start supporting your family again."

While we were there, the landlord came with a padlock and said, "You know, Henry is behind on his rent, and if he doesn't pay up, he has to move." The old Pastor asked, Henry, "Don't you want to come back?" And Henry said to the Pastor, "I could never take a step backwards. I can never go back to that which is less." It wasn't because it wasn't going to be hard for him that Henry made the choice. It was because of the joy that was set before him in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We were over there for about four weeks and you know when you have a miracle every day, it is hard to condense that down to less than an hour. But I want to tell you about one more person and the joy that came from his hearing the gospel. When we were out at the camp, there was one young man there whose name was Ely - they call him Elly but we call him Ely. Ely wanted to be baptized. He was staying at a place called Ringa where there was a church group, so he had kind of known some of the people; but when he came to the camp, he heard the gospel in such power that he wanted to be baptized. We told him he probably ought to talk to his parents, so he called home to talk to his mother about whether he could be baptized. He found that his mother was very ill, but she told him he could be baptized. So he was baptized that day, and after the baptisms, Eric told us that we needed to go to Ely's house to pray for his mother because she was so very sick. So Ron and I and Ely and his friend James and Elder Tom Nyawiri all went to Ely's mother's home, a place called Darajah Mbili. His mother could hardly breathe. She was wheezing as she tried to talk but was barely able to speak. She wanted to get us some food. We insisted, "You can hardly stand up. Don't get us any food! Let us pray for you." We talked to her a little bit about the prayer and administration. She said, "I know that God has sent you from far away to come to my house tonight, and I know that He sent you for one reason, and that if you pray for me, I will be healed."

So Ron and Tom and I laid our hands on her head, prayed for her. After the prayer, the wheezing stopped, and by the end of the night, we couldn't get her to stop talking! She was just excited and moving really fast. We were trying to get back, but she went out and made a bunch of food for us. One of the things she said was, "They called today to find out if my son could be baptized. I want you to know that I am giving my son to God." She said, "I want him to learn. I want him to know. I see such a change in his life, even just today. I want to give him to God to do His work!"

Brothers and sisters, will you give yourselves to God? Will you give yourselves to His work today? Does the joy and the salvation that the Lord offers you mean enough to you that you want to give yourself to Him? It's what the Lord desires for you. The Lord desires to be your strength and He desires to be your salvation. He wants you to be with Him, "For since the beginning of the world men have not

heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him. Thou meetest him that worketh righteousness, and rejoiceth him that remembereth thee in thy ways; in righteousness there is continuance, and such shall be saved."

(High Priest Robert Rolfe, who was in charge of the service, commented, "You have heard page one of the Acts of the brethren as they preach the Restored Gospel.")

News and Notes

Correction

The Newsletter typist inadvertently missed two corrections Seventy George Knotts made in his sermon, "The Promise of the Future". Psalm 119 is all about God's word and Armageddon occurs when Jesus comes back at the beginning of the thousand Year's reign.

The July "News and Notes" were accidentally missed in the July-August issue and are included here because of their significance to the congregation.

Three Baptisms Celebrated

At the close of the Missionary Family Reunion held at Grace-land University, three young people of the Mt. Ayr congregation were baptized. Teagin and Tanner Rowland received their water baptism in a reunion service held on the campus Friday afternoon. Cede Smith's water baptism was in a separate service held at the Stewart pond north of Lamoni on Saturday. It was necessary for her baptism to be held after the reunion in order for her father to be present at the service.

Teagin and Tanner received their baptism of the Holy Ghost on Sunday, June 25, during the Mt. Ayr worship service. Cede received hers Sunday, July 2, during the Mt. Ayr Communion service, a time when her father could again be present. Tanner and Teagin were baptized in water by their grandfather, Sherman Phipps. Their baptism of the Holy Ghost was under his hands again with Elder Alan Smith assisting. Brother Smith was their prebaptismal class instructor and now their Pastor. Cede was baptized by her grandfather, Ronald Smith and her baptism of the Holy Spirit was under his hands and the hands of Elder Jack Hagenson with Brother Hagenson the spokesman.

Congregation Worships In The Park

Worship services for the Sunday following the Missionary Family reunion, were held in Poe Hollow Park east of Mt. Ayr. They were a part of a Sunday School picnic pre-planned for the entire congregation and now included the baptism of the Holy Spirit for Teagin and Tanner. Fifty four worshippers assembled in lawn chairs and on blankets on the shady hillside. A brisk wind sent many scurrying to their cars to get wraps before the service began.

Barbra and Michael Jordison had equipped the park with sound and recording equipment. We gathered at 10:30 to the sound of recorded "Christian" music with our Pastor seated in the presider's chair awaiting our arrival. See the report of the service in the body of this letter.

The picnic dinner was provided by the catering service of Ruth Thomas, owner-manager of Grandma's Place in Lamoni. Following dinner, Barbra and Michael Jordison provided equipment and supervision for games for every age.

Members Serve at Reunion

Some 600 people registered for the Missionary Family Reunion, sponsored by the Restoration Seventy, at Graceland University again this year. The Reunion is directed by Alan and Valle Smith with Cheryl Phipps the registrar, Gerald Bolingbroke the treasurer. George Knotts and Ronald Smith are two of the eight Seventy who sponsor the Reunion. Yvonne Galusha is web master for the Seventy's site. Diane Anderson directed medical services for the week. Jan Jordison was the music director and Barbra Jordison the director and dispatcher for the carts, which serve many who would not otherwise be able to negotiate the distances to classes, meals and the facilities. Lynda Rolfe and Mildred Smith taught classes. Di Smith prepared lunch for nearly 100 persons gathered for worship and staff meeting before registration opened at 3:00 on Sunday, June 18.

Plans were announced for the next Reunion to open June 17, 2007.

Dorothy Harter Dies

Sister Dorothy Harter passed away at the age of 93. She was alert and a joy to visit right up to her last day here. For her there was not the "down time" so many suffer. All her children gathered for her funeral, and the Mt. Ayr congregation served the funeral lunch. Elder Gaylord Shaw and Dorothy's son, Donald conducted the service. Ron and Di Smith provided special music.

Planning for August/September

Plans were made for activities for September and the August plans reaffirmed at the regular planning session that followed the Zionie Dinner of August 6. They include the trip to the Zoo September 16 and the Retreat at Geneseo, Illinois September 22-24. Planning for the rest of the year had to await the selection of officers on August 9.

Plans for Retreat Completed

The Fall Retreat to be held at Geneseo, Illinois September 22-24 will feature Book of Mormon Foundation personnel. September 22 is the anniversary of the day the plates of the Book of Mormon were delivered to Joseph Smith, Jr. by the angel Moroni in 1827. Facilities at Geneseo are excellent for such a gathering with a capacity that exceeds 125. Costs are covered by free will offerings. Bedding and toilet articles should be brought from home. For convenience in planning food and housing, please let your plans be known ahead of time by notifying Mildred Smith at 641-78-7659, Henry Eppinger at 319-234-0093, or Mark Deiterick at 309-737-5800.

Personnel for 2006-2007 Chosen

At the annual business meeting held Wednesday, August 16, Elder Alan Smith was chosen to remain Pastor of the congregation and chose to continue his counselors, Gordon Winkler and Rodney Bastow at Mount Ayr, Robert Bolfe and Michael Jordison at Lamoni. Kathy Akers continues as secretary, and with her husband, as recorder. Cheryl Phipps is the new fellowship coordinator. Kent Clisby, Gordon Winkler and Cheryl Phipps were elected to two year terms on the building committee. Kent Clisby becomes the building coordinator and Jan Jordison the music coordinator and Lynda Rolfe the women's leader. All other positions remain as previously filled. The meeting was opened with prayers for those in need of prayers, as is usual in regular Wednesday evening prayer services. Other

business considered was a discussion conducted as a committee of the whole considering the need for a new furnace-air conditioning plant for the building. A meeting of the Building Committee was set for Sunday, August 20 and the planing session for the first Sunday of September. Announcements were made for a change in the women's class meeting from Tuesday to Thursday mornings and reservations for the upcoming retreat at Geneseo were taken.

Youth Advance at State Fair

Cessaries Galusha advanced to the finals in piano at the Iowa State Fair and Gable advanced in violin.

Students Return

Brandi Anderson has returned to the University of Missouri in Warrensburg. Heidi Winkler is again at William Jewell in Liberty, Missouri. Jared Beck, Erica Clisby and Titus Lin are enrolled at Graceland University in Lamoni. Cody Rowland has returned from basic army training to complete his senior year at Lamoni High before receiving advanced training for service. Jowett Bastow is working on his MBA at Northwest Missouri University at Maryville, MO and commuting from the family farm at Mount Ayr.

We are happy to welcome other Graceland students Katie Ellis, Lauren Smith, Zachary Wilson and Andrew Neill as well.

We're going to the
zoo, zoo, zoo.

How about you, you, you?
You can come too, too, too.

We're going to the
zoo, zoo, zoo.

Come to the Omaha Zoo
with us on
Saturday, Sept. 16.

Check with
Cheryl Phipps
for details.

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

From the Pastor's Desk

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