

Church of Jesus Christ

Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

NEWSLETTER

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Light of the World



News & Notes

February activities

Two special activities are planned for the Mount Ayr Restoration Branch during the month of February.

On Sunday, Feb. 15, the branch will have a Valentine's dinner to be held at the home of Ron and Di Smith in Lamoni.

The youth of the branch will be preparing and serving the meal for the evening and planning the program.

The dinner will begin at 6 p.m. that evening. Everyone is invited to partici-

pate.

A group from the branch will be attending the Booth Brothers gospel trio concert Saturday, Feb. 28, at the Country Meadows Baptist Church in Independence, MO.

This is one of the most popular gospel music groups in the nation, having won many awards.

Doors open at 1 p.m. for the 2 p.m. concert. Good seats go in a hurry, according to Tony and Sandy Crandell.

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MAKE TIME FOR GOD IN THE NEW YEAR

Priest Rodney Bastow
Mount Ayr, IA
January 4, 2015

My scripture for you this morning is taken from John 3:16-17:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

A couple of weeks ago Joel Loving called me and said he was going to be gone today. I think the way that he put it was, "Would you be comfortable speaking?" I'm getting to know Joel better all the time. He reminds me a lot of his father because I can imagine if he was asking me this that he probably had that little bit of a smile that Paul always had when he was asking me something that he thought he was getting away with. I told him sure. What else could I say? We're really glad to have Joel and Deni with us and all of our newcomers we've had in the past year -- Tony and Sandy and Jim and Bonnie. I didn't want to do anything that would make him think anything less of me as we get to know each other.

But I wasn't really honest, because I can't really say I'm comfortable to speak. I've spoken many times in the almost 40 years since I've been called to the priesthood, and I've always appreciated the opportunity and I've always enjoyed the experience. But, I can't say that I'm always comfortable doing it. It always makes me pretty nervous. And I worry a lot about what I'm going to be able to say. But God always provides and gives me the ideas and guides my thoughts in answer to my prayers. He directs me to scriptures and to readings that I'm able to share and I feel the spirit with me as a

deliver his message.

One thing I didn't ask Joel -- I didn't ask him and I thought about it later -- is God going to be comfortable with me speaking Sunday. Sometimes I think they want you to speak Rodney because there's no one left. But I look around and see there are plenty of other people he could have called today. So I pray that God is comfortable with me doing this and we are all able to sense his spirit with us here this morning. For that may we give him all the praise and all the glory.

I don't know if any of you had thought about this. Josh (Jordison), do you know how many days it is until Christmas? Very good. I think it's about 355. It will be here before we know it, won't it? You know each year it seems like we start hearing the ads for Christmas earlier and earlier. Some people are kind of annoyed by that. You know when they see the displays for Christmas being put up in September, they really think that's not right. And when we start seeing the same old Christmas movies on Hallmark Channel starting in July, we think, "I don't know about that."

We have a lot of build up to Christmas don't we? The closer you get the more it intensifies. Notice all the ads on TV for people in need. Animals shelters. Things like that. It's one right after the other right before Christmas. Then here comes Christmas. We have Christmas day, and then it's over. Hurry up and take down the decorations. Let's not talk about it any more until next September, when we start the whole thing over again.

I heard suggestion that we should think about Christmas all year long. Now that doesn't mean, Josh, that you're going to get presents all year long. I think the idea is probably a good one. When I taught school, the kids thought I

was a grinch around Christmas because I was always wanting them to study and they were wanting to have parties and stuff like that. For some reason it caused a conflict there.

But you know, in the days leading up to Christmas, people are more loving, they're more giving. That's probably why we see all the ads about helping people and things like that. People are more Christlike, aren't they. The children are trying to be better behaved to stay off Santa's naughty list.

I read a thing on Facebook about that. It said, "I found Santa's naughty list and all my friends were on it." But for the most part, I think people try to be good at Christmas time, they try to do good because of it. Cards are sent. We let people know we are thinking about them and that we care for them. One thing I really like are the Christmas carols -- "Silent Night," "Joy to the World," "O Come All Ye Faithful." You just can't hear those without being in the spirit in my opinion. To me they bring you a lot closer to the holy spirit.

I do a lot of Facebook surfing. I really enjoy seeing the pictures of the people on there with their children and their grandchildren. I like to see pictures of kids and their presents. We got to Skype out two grandchildren as they opened their presents. It wasn't like being there, but at least for a brief time we got to see them. And I do get really envious of people who have their children and grandchildren close to them so they can be with them on Christmas and other times like that.

I like seeing the pictures of the big family get-togethers and that brings back a lot of memories. We had planned on doing that ourselves this year until our plans get changed a little bit. But we did have a get together for New Years and that brought back some good memories.



But I think some of the posts that really touched me the most are those from people who have lost a loved one recently. It is their first Christmas without them. They talk about these people they've lost and they talk about them being in heaven with Jesus. They are at peace with that and it makes them feel good knowing that their loved ones may be having the best Christmas ever because they are with Jesus.

I hope when we think about Christmas it will help us to remember the birth of Jesus. If you look at the post by Pam Chown she explained it really well. I'd like to share part of it with you.

"The loss of Kyle has given us an inkling of just how great a sacrifice it was for both the Father and the Son, but he did it so that we could come back into his presence and dwell with him for all eternity."

Isn't that great? Doesn't it make you appreciate the gift of Jesus more?

"Now when I think about Christmas I will think about the sacrifice that God made by sending his only Begotten son. I will think about the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. He came to earth to show us how to live. And I will think about how he suffered and died for us so that we will have everlasting life."

I kind of hope we will think about Christmas all year long. But like Gordon said, "Today is a new day, a new week, a new month and a new year."

In Luke 22 there is a scripture I would like to share with you.

And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.

And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed,

Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.

And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.
Luke 22:40-43

I'd like to emphasize Jesus' prayer -- "Nevertheless not my will, but thine be done." I have a little devotional I found that goes like this.

"Like most people this time of year you are probably thinking about some

pretty big dreams and goals. And that's great. We should. But no matter what has happened in the past or what you are dreaming of in the future, won't you let your New Year's prayer be "not my will but your's be done"? Maybe you've gone through a disappointment and you don't understand it. You could easily be bitter and give up on your dreams. You need to realize today that God is at work in your life. He is directing your steps. What you thought was a setback is going to turn out to be a set up for a comeback. When you surrender your will to him, when you humble yourself before him, that's when God can take you to a new level. Let your prayer be "not my will but your's be done. Today as we begin the first days of 2015 know that God has you in the palm of his hands. He has good plans in store for your future. Surrender to his will, trust him with your whole heart, and let him order your steps in the new year."

About three weeks ago Deborah started having pain in her back. That happens. It's happened to her, it's happened to me. I like to credit it to our age and our doing things on the farm where we are lifting or getting knocked around by the cattle or whatever. Jumping out of a tractor or things like that happen all the time and we usually think that it will go away. Put some heat on it. Put some ice on it. It will go away in a couple of days.

We did that and it didn't go away. I went in to the chiropractor to have him check on an elbow I was having trouble with and he looked at Debbie while we were in there too. He barely touched her and it was extreme pain. Fortunately he didn't do anything else with it so we decided to go ahead and see the doctor. We scheduled an appointment and had it and the doctor suggested some possibilities of what it could be. He suggested X-rays and prescribed a muscle relaxer.

Normally we think what good are the X-rays going to do. They can't put you in a body cast. The muscle relaxers made things worse and the pain just continued. A couple weeks ago Debbie had Sherman and Joel administer to her. I need to give a little background on Debbie before I go any further with this.

Most of you know her and have heard her story before. Debbie didn't know about our church growing up. She was raised in a good, moral family. They had very good values. But they didn't really go to church. Her dad was a Methodist and her mom was a Catholic. Her dad would deliver her and her sisters to the church on Sunday mornings while he went to the gas station and had his own Sunday school. As far as believing in the power of prayer, the power of the Holy Spirit, in diving revelation -- that wasn't something that they knew about.

When she married me things were kind of strange for her. It was something totally different. It wasn't something she was used to. I don't know if it was the Irish in her or what, but she resisted this church for awhile. It was 15 years after we were married before she accepted the teaching of this church and decided to be baptized.

When she was administered to she had faith that the pain would go away. She expected it to go away immediately. Right then. But it didn't. And this was a bit troubling to us. She was scheduled for X-rays the next day so on our way we decided to go see the doctor again. He



Rodney Bastow



examined her (it was a different doctor) and he said right away, I think you have a compression fracture. He prescribed a stronger pain killer. We went ahead and had the X-rays and they confirmed what he had said. He ordered a brace for her to put on. The plan is that wearing the brace keeps her from moving that vertebrae so that the fracture can heal in three or four weeks. She still has the pain, but we hope we are finally getting some progress.

It was Deb who suggested to me that if her pain had gone away, she might not have known what her pain really was. She might have done something that would have made the situation a lot worse. We believe that God directed us to get the treatment that she did. She still has pain and we continue to need your prayers. She has pain especially when she gets up out of bed. We would ask that her pain might be lessened and that she won't do anything or have anything happen to her that would keep her healing from continuing on schedule.

(I don't know. This is just a side note. Starting with Diane and Debbie and now Beth. The women in this congregation should just put themselves in bubble wrap or something to see that nothing happens to them. I don't know if it's contagious or what's going on. I hope nothing happens to any of the rest of you.)

Another side effect to this ordeal that we have had is that Deb has needed

me more. She has hard time even putting the brace on without me. She can't lift anything so I have to do things like that for her. Bending over is a big no-no. When she drops something, sometimes she lets me pick it up. I've tried to be more attentive to her needs and she's been very appreciative and it's brought us closer together as a couple.

God always answers our prayers, but not always like we think he will. Today we have the opportunity to redirect our lives. We can ask to see the things we are doing that are keeping us from having a closer walk with God. If we do God's will and trust in him with our whole heart, we can let him order our steps in the new year.

I found another devotional that has to do with the new year that I would like to share with you as well.

"It's interesting how people's priorities and to-do lists change toward the end of each year. People pack their schedules with parties, planning and shopping. Then after Christmas we turn our focus toward our goals and dreams for the new year. But if we're not careful the very things that matter most can end up on the bottom of the list. That's why we have to be diligent about spending time with the people who matter the most to us, and especially spending time with our Heavenly Father. If we are going to be at our best, if we are going to keep growing and moving forward, we need to keep God as a top priority

on our list every single day. What is we could be diligent about seeking God and spending more time with him? When things get busy, when the children need something, when it's hectic at the office, when you have a thousand things to do, that's when you have to stand strong and say, "No, this is not an option. I'm going to be strong. I'm going to be productive today. If I'm going to have God's favor than I've got to arrange some priorities so I can spend time with him." You may have to get up a little earlier. You just need to remember that you draw strength, encouragement and wisdom when you are in God's presence. That's what keeps your life fresh. That's what keeps you moving forward. As we enter the new year, I want to encourage you to remember that spending time with God is on the top of your list. There is no better way to spend your time than on the timeless One."

I'd like to close with Matthew 6:38-39:

Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day shall be the evil thereof.



Food Gathered for Food Pantry

A total of 50 food, health and paper good items were collected to take to the Mount Ayr MATURA Neighborhood Center in the month of January.

The branch is using the third Sunday of the month to collect the items that help the hungry in the area with needs.

Food can be brought any Sunday during the month, but the third Sunday is the Sunday where this is an emphasis.

The goal is to double the number of items for the food bank in February, according to Sandy Crandell, who heads up the brach outreach service projects.





TIMING OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE

**Elder Gene Story
Cameron, MO
December 11, 2015**

Brother Ed Anderson, our presider, read Matthew 22:4 as a Call to Worship. . . . *Tell them that are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my oxen, and my fatlings have been killed, and my dinner is ready, and all things are prepared; therefore come unto the marriage.*

Brother Story: I'd like to share with you this morning for your consideration from the 85th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants. It's one of those that it's difficult to find a starting spot and an ending spot. I'm going to start at 10c. *He comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things: and all things are by him, and of him; even God, for ever and ever. And again, verily I say unto you, He hath given a law unto all things by which they move in their times, and their seasons; and their courses are fixed; even the courses of the heavens, and the earth; which comprehend the earth and all the planets; and they give light to each other in their times, and in their seasons, in their minutes, in their hours, in their days, in their weeks, in their months, in their years: all these are one year with God, but not with man. The earth rolls upon her wings; and the sun giveth his light by day, and the moon giveth her light by night; and the stars also giveth their light, as they roll upon their wings, in their glory, in the midst of the power of God. Unto what shall I liken these kingdoms, that ye may understand? Behold, all these are kingdoms, and any man who hath seen any or the least of these, hath seen God moving in his majesty and power.*

I'd like to call us all to go into the

garden this morning. This is where we want to go. This is where we want to be. We want to walk with Him and talk with Him and listen to the words that He has given us and the things that He has told us.

I do want to share just briefly and I may lose my voice. This morning is the first time I've been able to talk in two weeks so this is a great blessing and I thank the Lord that He's given me that. I thank Him especially for His gift this morning in the hymn "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." I like to have some confirmation that He's going to be with me during the message that I'm going to bring whatever that message might happen to be.

This morning as we drove up I began singing in my head "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." I thought, boy if we sang that this morning that would just be such a confirmation to me, but we hardly ever sing that song except around Easter so what a blessing to see that that was one of the hymns we were going to sing.

Ed said that I should introduce myself but we got to know each other through the adult class this morning. It was wonderful and I apologize for talking as much as I did but stimulating discussion is wonderful and I think the Saints need to have stimulating discussion and to share with one another the things that the Lord has given us.

I thought about some of the things that I might share this morning. One of the big things we have to look at when we study and look at anything is what are FACTS and what are theories. There's a huge difference between the two. There are facts and I read one of them just now. He hath given a law unto all things. He comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him,

and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things: and all things are by him, and of him; even God, for ever and ever. That is something that we can stand on. God knows everything. Past that it pretty much gets sketchy but we have a wonderful blessing because the Lord has given us three sets of scriptures. We can believe in what's in the Inspired Version. We can believe what's in the Book of Mormon and we can believe the things that are in the Doctrine & Covenants. We have those scriptures before us so I am going to put them on the FACT side. What I have to be real careful with now is my interpretation of these things. Even as we talked about this morning a little bit, what is our interpretation?

To read one interpretation of scripture and look at prophecy as something that comes through the Spirit of the Lord is a much bigger category than if we say prophecy has to do with the future. Most of the time when we think about prophecy we think about the future but we have to be careful, and I would encourage you as you read and study to remember these things. Remember the words in here are from God. Are there mistakes? Of course there are mistakes because God didn't write them on the paper did He? He gave them to the minds of individuals and those individuals took them and placed them on paper.

In the case of the Book of Mormon it was then translated or abridged by Mormon and finished by Moroni. So we have the last portion that was abridged by Mormon and Moroni. The first part Nephi wrote and his family on down until they came to us so we have those words that they wrote. Are they without error? No because they are subject to



men but we know that they are the word of God and we count on that. This is the one thing that we have that is going to keep us in contact with God. When we have these scriptures before us they become our conduit that connects us with Him. They become the thing that we can lean on. If it doesn't agree with what's in these scriptures then we've got to look at two different things. (1) What it is that appears not to agree or (2) what our opinion is that may keep it from agreeing. It's very difficult as we look at these things.

I've talked a little bit this morning about some of the things that go on. I've thought about them and about Joseph Smith. There's a point where people began to pull anything that had Joseph's name on it out of the woodwork and call it a revelation. If Joseph even read that, it was now a revelation. We know that that's not true and many of the things that Joseph looked at we know today were just simply things in the past or avenues that he looked at. The things that were given to us as revelation, those are the revelations of God, the ones that were presented to us. As I look at the place where I am today, I can tell you it's not the same place where I was when I started. I like to think that I am getting a little bit closer to the truth. Now maybe that's just in my mind so I have to be careful. We have to be careful about the things that we consider as facts. Are these things definite, or things that we have put in our mind as being fact, things that we perceive?

You know the truth is difficult to discern. The more you study it the more you look back at Pilot's little comment, 'What is truth.' Even as you look at the different things, the calendars change, this changes, that changes. What is truth? What do you have that you can really hang your hat on? We've got something. We've got God and we know He never changes. We've got His word and we know that our Redeemer lives and that we can meet Him in the garden whenever we're prepared to go there. He's there waiting for us.

As we go along and look at the things that we have before us we have to attempt to understand them. I believe

that all of the words that are in the scriptures are important, even in the Book of Numbers. How many of you like to read Numbers? There are a few chapters in Numbers that are kind of neat but I love when you get to, 'And he brought 13 oxen and 12 spoonsful of this and a couple of tablespoons of that and 3 quarts and whatever.' And then the next tribe the leader, what did he bring? The same thing as the previous list and he repeats it twelve times. I have no idea what this means but I don't think that the Lord repeated it twelve times just because He thought it was cute. I think it has meaning and someday one of you is going to tell me what that meaning is and I look forward to that because I don't understand it but I will guarantee you it's going to knock my socks off when you tell me. And I'll think why didn't I see that before? It's so obvious now that you've pointed it out.

We have to look at the scriptures with an open mind and recognize that some of the things that we understand may not be as they really are but may simply be our understanding. The theory of relativity definitely applies. What angle are you looking at it from? Kind of like the blind man and the elephant, it makes a difference which end you start at. So as we look at the scriptures we try to put them together and try to determine the things that are facts and things that are fiction.

As I study and attempt to understand the scriptures I've learned a lot of different things. You have to study beyond just the scriptures themselves to attempt to discern the things that are going on. You have to study other works and find out things. You know the more you study the more you find out how much you don't know even about things that have already happened. Part of the study I'd like to share with you is about the timeframe and calendars and when things happen. You know when you go back in time the people that research it can't even agree. They can't even agree when this thing happened or that thing happened and then the calendars overlap and it gets so confusing and it's unreal.

Do you know who had the most accurate ancient calendar as far as I'm concerned? This is my opinion. I'm standing in the theory area now. In my opinion the most accurate ancient calendar that I'm aware of was the Hebrew calendar. Do you know why? It was tied directly to the seasons. The Lord told them when He brought them out of Egypt, 'This shall be the first of months to you. The month of Aviv is going to be the first of months.' Who knows what Aviv means? It's also written Abib. It's a Hebrew term that has to do with the ripeness of the barley. When it reaches a certain stage of ripeness, that starts the first month of the year so seasons aren't going to vary. Almost all the other ancient calendars came up with all kinds of different formulations but the Hebrew calendar is a lunar calendar based on the moon and starts in the springtime.

Now when do the Jews celebrate their new year? It's in the fall around September. The reason is because that's what they had before the Lord gave them the new commandment so their old secular calendar starts in the fall. However, their religious calendar starts in the spring. They don't really want to take what the Lord gave them and start the year over here. They've got to hang on to this old idea so how many thousands of years down the road are we now? Three or four thousand but they're still hanging on to the fall as the start of the year. Perhaps they thought Adam and Eve were put in the garden in the fall and took the fruit right away that was ripe I guess. Maybe they were in the garden for a long time before they took the fruit. Those are assumptions that we can make. I don't know if Adam and Eve were in the garden for a day. How long did it take before the snake deceived Eve? Actually it wasn't a snake was it? It had legs but the Lord took them away. So the serpent came up to Eve and said, 'Hey, by the way that fruit's good right over there.' Was it a day, a week, a month or years? I don't know. I do know that it happened. That much I know and on that I can hang my hat.

Anyway the Lord moved the calen-



dar and He changed it and said it was going to start in the springtime. How did they determine the start of the Hebrew month? It was by the new moon. What do we call the new moon today? You look up in the sky when the scientists say tonight is the new moon and what do you see? Nothing. You see nothing. No moon. Isn't that a great way to tell the start of the month, there's nothing there so I go up tomorrow night and there's nothing there and I went up last night and there's nothing there. That's a good way to start something isn't it? It's like starting a race. When nothing happens, go! There was nothing.

No, that wasn't a new moon. The whole concept that we have of a new moon is a misnomer. We recognize that after the no moon that you see a new one. The old one fades away to nothing and then you see a new one. It's just a sliver that's always in the western sky because that's just the way it works. When the sun goes down and when the moon is separated enough from that new moon state where it's in line with the sun and there's enough space in there you can still see the moon just before dark. It's been there all day, riding along behind the sun but when the sun goes down then you can see it and that's when the new moon is. That then signifies the first day of the month. When did that day start? Well, it started in the evening when the sun went down and you could see it. That now is the first day.

The council would get together the next morning and they would have witnesses come in and tell them that they had seen the new moon. The council had all these questions they would ask them. In the mouth of two or three witnesses are all things established. They brought them in and had the council confirm they did see the moon. They knew it was going to be in the western sky and it was going to be a sliver. Then they would declare that it was the first day of the month.

If we're going to do that, there is some little something that we have to have that's going to get us all on the same page. Do you know what that is? We've all got to be in the same place because

the new moon doesn't happen and can't be seen by everybody at the same time. If you happen to be in China and the sun goes down the moon might not be visible yet but several hours later when the sun goes down in Israel it's visible so now you declare the new day but China won't declare the new day until tomorrow.

So the calendar was also based on being in Jerusalem. That's very important. The Jews found after the Roman diaspora in which the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and scattered the Jews, that it was really hard to tell when the new moon was because they were in the wrong place. They weren't in Jerusalem. Could they see the new moon in Jerusalem? No. That's when they came up with a calculated calendar. Mathematically they do pretty good. Actually I went back and compared it to a NASA website. I went back and got the new moons back to around the time of Christ's birth and it is amazing how close they came. NASA even says NASA's estimates are plus or minus three hours that far back. They can't even be certain because there are so many variables involved but that's as close as they can estimate it. I think the furthest I came off in my research was about 15 hours that the Rabbis were off from NASA's estimate. That's not too bad. The tricky part is, and the thing that people don't know is, that then they modified the calendar on top of that. Their calculations were based on when the new moon appeared and then they set the time from there.

They did have some variables that they plugged in so they could kind of say well the moon should have been visible in Jerusalem on this day and they didn't do too badly there. Then they added some more variables because they decided that God wouldn't want the feasts to fall on back to back days. He wouldn't want them to fast on Friday and Saturday or Saturday and Sunday. Two days would be too much so they were pretty certain that the Lord wanted them to skip some days some times. They calculated this all back and they had to figure out when the next year started in order to figure out the calendar for

the current year. They kind of went back to the next year, figured it out and it all worked backwards and then you got your days all numbered from there. From the end of the year in September back to the first of Nissan, which is the month of aviv when the barley is ripe, is always the same. Then from there back they may add a month. They have leap years about every three years roughly or actually a little less than that where they add a month to their calendar. That's why the time of Passover jumps all over the place because the calendar actually adds a month to get them back in line. They do that totally mathematically any more. It's a set pattern which is not the way it was originally. Originally they saw the new moon which started a new month (and if the barley was in aviv it started a new year).

One of the things we find out is that we get to looking at some of these Hebrew calendar things and we think we can go back and look and see that it's based on the Hebrew so it has to be right. No, it's been modified. One of the interesting modifications they made was that the new year couldn't start on Sun-



Gene Story



day, Wednesday or Friday because then they had those back to back holidays and the Lord doesn't want us to fast two days in a row. That never existed in the scriptures. Since the Karaite Jews have come back to Jerusalem in the late 40s, they do it by the new moon and by the ripeness of the barley. If you go on their website, www.karaite-korner.org, and look down to about March you won't see anything after that. They have an estimated looking for the new moons and an estimated looking for the twelfth new moon here but then after that they aren't sure when the new year is.

It's amazing how dependent we've become on calendars. Calendars use to have very little meaning. About the only calendar that meant anything was the new moon and seven days which stayed the same always and you rested on the seventh. It's interesting with the modifications that they, the Rabbi's, made if you go back and look, their calendar dates aren't always on the right day. They may actually move the day two days from where it should have been, where the moon actually should have been sighted just to make the calendar fit some of their new rules. One of the rules has to do with the length of the year. There are only certain allowable lengths of the year, like six of them: 353, 354, 355 days or 383, 384, 385 days. Those are the only allowable lengths of the year so they have to modify it to meet the certain lengths of the year. It's extremely confusing to try to figure it out but it's not tough to figure out if you look up in the sky. That will tell you when it is.

Anyhow the effect that they, the Rabbinical calendars, have by moving the dates is that Passover or the 15th of Nissan will never be on a Friday. I believe that they knew what they were doing when they did that. This calendar was actually set after they were scattered from Jerusalem, probably about 300 years AD, after Christianity was in its big rise. Those brethren knew something that you and I don't know. When was Christ crucified? Good Friday, right? Everybody knows Christ was crucified on Good Friday. When was He resurrected? Early in the morning

on the first day of the week, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, right? No, it's not working because in another place He says three days and three nights. By robbing Friday of ever being a possible day, it denies the divinity of Christ because it refutes the New Testament story. The New Testament story if we read it closely says that Christ came into Jerusalem after the Sabbath. He came in on Palm Sunday so we can set that day.

Follow through Mark and he gives you a day-by-day account. A lot of people you may have talked to in the past say that they left out a day in that week so the Lord must have taken it off. Since He was getting ready to be crucified, He probably needed a vacation. I don't believe the Lord took a day off that week.

I believe Mark says exactly what Mark means and he tells us about Palm Sunday and describes the next days. So after Palm Sunday we have Him coming into the temple on Monday and Tuesday it tells that they went out and the fig tree was dead when they came back in. Then Wednesday it begins to describe much more of the activity that went on. Palm Sunday would have been the 10th day of Nissan, the day that the Passover lamb was selected. On the tenth day of the month you shall pick you out a lamb, a male of the first year and you shall keep him up until the fourteenth day of the month and on the fourteenth day of the month at evening you shall kill him.

We have the account of Christ coming in on the tenth on Sunday, of Him working on Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday the thirteenth. On Wednesday night the 13th the Last Supper occurred. It talks about Him going into the garden and praying there. Unfortunately a lot of us sit there and look at those apostles in the garden and think how did they fall asleep and what are we doing? Ouch. We've fallen asleep in the garden.

The next day on Thursday, after sunset on the 13th, the 14th day of the month the Sanhedrin came and got Him in the garden and quizzed Him all night. During the next day on the 14th, Thursday day, they took Him to Pilot. What happened with Pilot? Look in

John for this. The Jews did not go in so that they could partake of the feast because if they went in to a Gentile dwelling they were unclean and they couldn't eat the feast, which means that the feast had not happened yet. Certainly Christ partook of that Last Supper which was part of the Passover that really begins on the 10th when the lamb is selected and doesn't end for over a whole week.

This is all part of the celebration so when Christ says with desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you it was the preparatory meal, the meal that took place the night before the preparation. On the 14th day of the month you shall take the lamb and you shall kill it in the place the Lord thy God shall tell thee. They were told to do this when they were still in Egypt. Take it and kill it at Jerusalem. They killed the lamb about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. What time did Christ die on the cross? Three o'clock in the afternoon on the 14th day of the month of Nissan. He was the Passover lamb. Not a bone shall be broken. Why didn't they break Christ's bones when they came to Him on the cross? He was already dead. The thieves' bones were broken. Every whit of that Passover commandment was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

He was the Passover Lamb. He was the lamb of God not just in figure but in fact, the very lamb of God who was crucified on the 14th day of the month of Nissan and was placed in the tomb on Thursday before the sun went down. He died at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Maybe the body wasn't in the grave yet but where was the Spirit? It was already there wasn't it? He died on Thursday. He was dead on Thursday day. He was dead on Friday night which follows Thursday in the Old Testament. He was dead on Friday day, Saturday night, Saturday day and Sunday night. Three days and three nights, and Sunday morning early in the morning He came out of the grave.

Three days and three nights but because the Hebrews have altered the calendar people think Passover never could happen on a Friday. You can take all of the Rabbinical Jewish calendars in the world and you will see the Passover



never happens on Friday ever. Why? Because that would be back to back days that the women could not go to the tomb. They were both holy days, the 15th day of the month of Nissan was a holy day. The 16th day was the normal Sabbath. They could not go to the tomb until the first day of the week. Do you think those ladies would not have been there as soon as possible? But because the law forbade it, the law of God forbade it, they showed up on the morning of the first day of the week and found their risen Savior and met Him in the garden.

We have to cast away our old thoughts. Let's cast away the things that we think we know that are on the theory side. We've got to put them together with the puzzle pieces from the FACT side because the Lord gives us the pieces. You know one of the problems we get into today is that all the pieces have to fit. Have you ever put a puzzle together that was really tough and you found one little piece that really looked like it fit right here and you put it there but the puzzle would never work because that piece really belonged over here? The scriptures are like that, brothers and sisters, and we have to look and analyze where did we put our puzzle piece. Do we have a piece out of place?

Christ didn't die on Good Friday, he died on Thursday and if we take that information that Christ died on the 14th day of the month then the thing that's interesting to me is trying to figure out when He was born. You would think His birthday would have some significance. It was surely an important time. Jonathan Cahn, a writer and a Messianic Jew, thinks that probably He was born on the new moon, the first day of the month. It makes sense so I went back and tried to figure it out. I looked in the Book of Mormon which gives us much information and it tells us several things that are really key to this question of the date of His birth.

When did Christ die? He died 33 years and 4 days after He was born. It tells us that very clearly . . . in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, in the fourth day of the month. . . (3rd Nephi 4:6) Now some folks would take that

information and theorize, if we used the Mayan Calendar how long was that. Or if we used the Hebrew Calendar how long was that, but what language was the Book of Mormon translated into? It was translated into English, so what time frame do you suppose the Lord translated the date into? Ours, right the Gregorian calendar that we use today would have been the one that was used. I just read according to the Mayan calendar the number of years or timeframes there would have been. The Lord knows how to translate that into the thirty and fourth year in the first month and the fourth day of the month.

A person wrote a program on the internet where you can plug in a date and it will give you eight or ten calendars that you can find and the Mayan calendar is one of them. He's got it matched up with the theoretical Jewish calendar which, of course, is the calculated one. When you take these things in mind and then you put things together you can find out when Lehi left Jerusalem. It was 600 years before the Savior was born. Nebuchadnezzar first invaded Judah between 599-597 BC. We aren't one hundred percent sure but it's somewhere in that timeframe.

Let's put all the pieces together. Who was alive at the time that Christ was born? Herod the Great was the one who wanted to kill Him. Christ was about two years old when Herod heard about Him, so His birth had to be at least two years before the death of Herod. Herod the Great, as best we can tell, died in 4 BC. Christ had to have been born at least by 6 BC. Now that's really tough to fit between 599 BC and 6 BC isn't it? That only leaves us about 593 years or so. It's not working so now we have to look a little further and see that often times prophetically years are given as 360 days. That translates into roughly 591 years plus a little bit. (360 days x 600 years = 21,600 days / 365.25 days/year = 591.375 years) If we take that and plug it in there, that's going to take us to around 6 to 8 BC. (599-591=8, 597-591=6)

Somewhere between 6 and 8 BC Christ was born. If we want to find out

when He died and we check out new moons, it was about 33 years later. The year the new moon would have fallen so that the 14th day of Nissan which would have been a Friday would have been 27 AD so we can discern that He would have been born in 7 BC which concurs with all the information we have. Every part of the puzzle now fits together.

In class this morning we talked that Nephi was prophesying that that night the sign would be given of the birth of Christ. They were getting ready to kill the believers. I think that they may have calculated the years with the 360 day year and then they turned around and probably calculated the furthest extent when the five years could have been and said that if His birth hadn't happened by this time they were going to kill all the believers.

Did the Mayans know how long a real year was? I don't care what calendar they kept. It doesn't matter. Their buildings and things down there cast shadows precisely on the solstice. They know exactly how long the year is. They knew it enough to build a building to do that. How many of us could do that? How many of us even have a clue how to do that? They knew exactly how long a year was. They knew when that five years was up and so they planned to kill the believers, but the Lord had other plans because His timing is perfect. Again, this is all theory but it is a concept.

I took several years in there from 1 AD all the way back to 8 BC. However, we know that 1 AD can't be right because Herod had to be alive or the whole thing is of no effect and our time frame from our 600 years falls around 6 to 8 BC. I did a calculation backwards on our calendar and then compared it to the Hebrew calendar. It's kind of interesting, the numbers that are black and red on this calendar I am holding up are April (Julian) and Nissan estimated at 7 BC. You notice this is purely coincidence. I'm not going to put any emphasis on this at all but it just happens to be that the first day of Nissan and the first day of April occurred on the same day in 7 BC. That's why those numbers are mixed colors. The rest of the numbers



are the first day of Nissan in green and the first day of April in AD 27 which should have been the year of His death.

When I went backwards and figured out these calendars, I found out that the date when using those figures and using a Roman or Julian calendar would have put His birth on the 7th of April or the 7th of Nissan in 7 BC. Now it's interesting in 6 BC and 8BC it would have been on the 6th of April. Don't get hung up on that even though it's really tempting. Again this is the Julian calendar and not the Gregorian because the Gregorian didn't exist at this time. It gets too complex to even try to follow. The interesting thing is as I began to look at it and try to figure it out the 7th of Nissan doesn't really amount to any particular day. Neither does the 6th of Nissan. There's



nothing in the scriptures that happens on those days so my whole theory kind of went down the tube.

I got to thinking about how hard the calendars are to follow and maybe I got something messed up. Even our calendar today doesn't have New Years on December 25th every year. Why if Christmas is on December 25th does the new year start on January 1st.

Of course they made it on December 25th because the Julian calendar was off in the timeframe by several days. The winter solstice actually took place on December 25th and that's when the pagans were having Yule celebrating their pagan holidays so the Pope decided that they would just call it Christ's birthday and that would fix it. The Pope thought it would work out perfect because in different parts of the world the year even started at different times.

Under the old Julian calendar it was primarily on the 1st of January but the Pope said, 'Well, if we just say that December 25th will be Christ's birthday, what will January 1st be?' What day of the week did Christmas fall on this year? It fell on Thursday and New Year's also fell on Thursday. According to the He-

brew calendar what day would that be? We say that Christmas and New Year's are 7 days apart but Hebrews say they are 8 days apart because under the old numbering system and even in the way that we number things if your birthday is on January 1st your second year starts on January 1st. It starts the next year of your life. Without the 0 concept when you count to next Sunday you have to count today so whenever it says the 8th day it's the same day of the week which gets us into a whole lot more things about the Sabbath Day and about Sunday and 8 days later.

What happens on the 8th day in the Hebrew culture under the law of God? On the 8th day a male child is circumcised. That's an important day. What does Paul say, a Hebrew of Hebrews, circumcised the 8th day. It wasn't about my birthday, it was about this day. January 1st the Pope decided was the first of the new year because that was when the circumcision would have been. It's a great day to start the year. That is when the covenant with God is really made, at circumcision.

Now let's go back and look. If we take the 6th of Nissan, then the 8th day

is the 13th it doesn't do too much for me but if we take 7 BC the 7th day of Nissan and we take the 8th day on the 14th day of Nissan the Lord would have been circumcised. It would have initiated His covenant with God on this earth. What else was the 14th day? The Passover Lamb is killed. That's just another witness.

Brothers and sisters, I won't guarantee you that this is correct but I will tell you that if you study and call upon the Lord and read these scriptures, you will learn far more than this. He will reveal to you truths and mysteries that you can't imagine. When I began to study these things I had no idea He would reveal the things to me that I feel He has. These are only revelations to me. You have to have your own revelations. You have to call upon the Lord and all the puzzle pieces have to fit, every one, no exceptions. If all the puzzle pieces fit then I believe the Lord is guiding you in His light and His direction and that He will guide us to great things. May the Lord bless you as you study His word and seek to come to greater understanding of His desires for you.





SHARING

Priest Ed Anderson Lamoni, IA January 18, 2015

Brother Jim Barber read Isaiah 58:13-14 as a Call to Worship. *If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

Brother Anderson shared: I'd like to welcome you here. It's always a privilege to come and share with the Saints, to enjoy the fellowship and the Spirit of God. Rob was talking in his class a little bit about what we needed to do differently in our lives to establish Zion.

Ben called last night around 10:30 p.m. which is way past our bedtime. He woke us up. He asked what we did to prepare for our Patriarchal Blessing. Diane shared her experience of increased prayer and fasting. I told him that I didn't really remember what I did differently to prepare. Then I got to thinking and one of the things that did occur to me was that when I got to Brother James Thomas's house in Lamoni for my Patriarchal Blessing.

I walked into the house and he said, 'Oh, I forgot. I didn't realize that I had scheduled you for your Patriarchal Blessing today.' The thing that I remember most about it was he told me to give him ten minutes to prepare to go into the presence of the Lord. Now what I mean by that is that he took a shower, combed his hair and put on his Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes so that he was prepared to go into the presence of the Lord. Obviously I have reread the Blessing many times and I still can't tell you what it all says but I do remember Brother Thomas's preparation to come

before the Lord.

I selected a scripture from the Doctrine & Covenants 22:23a-b. *And the Lord God spake unto Moses, saying, The heavens, they are many and they can not be numbered unto man, but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine; and as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof, even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words; for this is my work and my glory, to bring to pass the immortality, and eternal life of man.*

Diane's friend sent us an email entitled, "Seven Wonders of the World." It starts out, A group of students were asked to list what they thought were the present Seven Wonders of the World. Now everyone knows what those are, right? Though there were some disagreements the following received the most votes: 1) Egypt's great pyramids, 2) the Taj Mahal, 3) the Grand Canyon, 4) Panama Canal, 5) the Empire State Building, 6) St. Peter's Basilica and 7) China's Great Wall.

While gathering the votes the teacher noted that one student had not yet finished her paper so she asked the girl if she was having trouble with her list. The girl replied, 'Yes, a little. I couldn't quite make up my mind because there were so many.' The teacher said, 'Well tell us what you have and maybe we can help.' The girl hesitated and then read, 'I think the seven wonders of the world are: 1) to see, 2) to hear, 3) to touch, 4) to taste, 5) to feel, 6) to laugh and 7) to love.' I think these wonders are much greater than the man-made ones.

I was curious about what the meaning of the word 'gift' was so I looked it up. Does anybody have any idea what a gift is? A gift can be something you get or something that you give. If you give a gift it should be something you give that you don't expect compensation for. If you expect compensation it no longer is a gift. The scriptures say that if we give gifts but we really don't want to give them, we might as well have kept them

because it's not going to count toward our righteousness.

Ben, our son, was in need of an extension cord. He is newly married and doesn't have the tools and the equipment that he needs to work on the house that they bought. I have several extension cords that range from new to well-used and taped up with black tape because I've torn the cover off the cord. When he asked me that, my first response was to give him one of my less than perfect extension cords. Then I questioned why I would give him a used one.

If I was giving an extension cord to Christ, which one would I pick so I gave him the new one. He said, 'No, no I don't really want this one that's new.' I told him that I had dozens of them and that they all worked and did the job so he took the new one. When we give gifts let's think about giving the best gifts. We've just gone through the holiday season. We know the story of the birth of Jesus. We know that the Magi came and brought gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Did Christ, the baby, need those?

Doctrine and Covenants 11:4b says, and no one can assist in this work, except he shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope, and charity, being temperate in all things whatsoever shall be intrusted to his care.

I have another story. It is basically out of the 22nd chapter of Genesis. It talks about Abraham. He was given a commandment from God to take his only son and offer him for a burnt offering. God promised Abraham that his seed would be known among all the nations but yet God told him to take his only son and offer him as a burnt offering. Abraham rose up and went to do what the Lord commanded. He made preparation by getting the wood for the burnt offering and then he took Isaac and went up into the mountain. He told the young men who had come with them to stay below because he and Isaac were going to worship the Lord.



He took the wood and fire. Evidently he had a stick with fire on it to get the fire started after he got there. He also took a knife and Isaac his son. Isaac was probably a little bit frightened about this time. He started to ask Abraham about what they were going to do for the offering, where was the lamb. Abraham told him that God would provide a lamb. He didn't tell him that he was going to take the place of the lamb.

Abraham built the altar and put the wood on it, bound Isaac and put him on the altar. Isaac was probably really scared by this point. Abraham raised the knife to slay his son and an angel called out to Abraham not to hurt his son. The angel said - this is the one I really want you to pay attention to - . . . I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only Isaac from me. (Genesis 22:15) Abraham looked around and found a ram caught by the horns and offered the ram as a burnt offering instead of his son.

To get back to the Magi I mentioned earlier some in the restoration believe that they may have come from this country but wherever they came from it was not the gift that they brought I believe was important. They were following the son. They had committed their lives to visit the Savior of the world. It was a changing point in their lives. They had prepared.

Everybody is aware of the sacrifices made in the Old Testament. What were those sacrifices to be? They were to be pure and undefiled before God, without spot or blemish. Even for the Passover a ram without spot or blemish was shed and the blood was put over the doorpost. It's our attitude. It's not what we give. It's not what we bring but it's the attitude in which we bring it. I think we found that out in the beginning. Satan wanted to save everybody for his glory. Cain killed Abel because his gift was not accepted. Probably the reason it was not accepted was because of the attitude in which it was given.

We talked a little bit again this morning about things that we need to do to build Zion. When we kneel before God we seek to be like Him. In some respects we seek to be a living sacrifice, correct? We seek to be pure, holy,

without sin. In essence we are kind of like that sacrifice. Rather than giving a gift to achieve that sacrifice we are the gift. As I read before the purpose of God is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. That is our gift to Him. The only real gift that has any significance is that we present ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice. All of our possessions, all of our pride, all of our wisdom, all of our accomplishments come as a result of our commitment to God but first comes our commitment, a change from carnal to spiritual.

Jesus came. He wasn't a second stringer like the Ohio State quarterback that won the national title. That quarterback was the third stringer because the first two were hurt. Christ was a first stringer. He was the man. He said that He was going to suffer. He was going to be humble and do the will of the Father. The gift that we present must be pure without spot or blemish and sinless.

In the Book of Mormon Mosiah 1:50-59 says, *Behold, ye have called me your king; and if I, whom ye call your king, do labor to serve you, then had not ye ought to labor to serve one another? And behold, also, if I, whom ye call your king, who has spent his days in your service, and yet has been in the service of God, doth merit any thanks from you, O how had you ought to thank your heavenly King! I say unto you, my brethren, that if you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole souls have power to possess, to that God who has created you, and has kept and preserved you, and has caused that ye should rejoice, and has granted that ye should live in peace one with another; I say unto you, that if ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and art preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move, and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another; I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole soul, yet ye would be unprofitable servants. And behold, all that he requires of you, is to keep his commandments; and he has promised you that if ye would keep his commandments, ye should prosper in the land; And he never doth vary from that which*

he hath said; therefore, if ye do keep his commandments, he doth bless you, and prosper you. And now, in the first place, he hath created you, and granted unto you your lives, for which ye are indebted unto him. And secondly: he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you, for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you; and therefore, he hath paid you. And ye are still indebted unto him; and are, and will be, for ever and ever; therefore, of what have ye to boast? Of what importance are we unless we do the will of the Father?

That is our work to purify ourselves. Because Christ has loved us and brought us to where we are we are called to love other people. We are called to share with them the joy which is in our hearts. We should be bubbling over so much that we can't keep our mouths shut because of the joy in our hearts. Out in the world you receive some negative input, a lot of negative input even some legalistic things if you are trying to share the gospel at work. All of this is to discourage you from being the witness that you are called to be. We don't feel like we can share anymore because we might tread on the sensitivities of someone else. This is Satan's great plan



Ed Anderson



to stifle the message of the gospel. The United States was created and established that this gospel might be shared. This is the place where it was able to grow and prosper. Is that changing because of the sin and iniquity that is happening? Yes, I think it is changing.

I think that the Christians, in general, and those in the Restoration are not as free to share as we were because of the sins and iniquities but we're still called. We are still called to bring that message, to share that joy. In general, the more a

person shares about Christ the more he is enthused about it. Let's all try to be a little more enthused. Let's all try to share the gospel more, share the hope that is within us that others might also have that hope.



NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US

**Elder Michel Jordison
Lamoni, IA
December 25, 2015**

As a Call to Worship Brother Alan Smith read Deuteronomy 30:19-20. *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live; That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him; for he is thy life, and the length of thy days; that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.*

Our speaker, Brother Michael Jordison, read Romans 8:35-39. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

I love each one of you. I love our God. I am so thankful for His Spirit, for His blessings and that He is mindful of us. I am thankful that He loves me in spite of my many weaknesses. I

know that there is a lot of suffering in this world and a lot of pain. Sometimes we ask the question, why? Why do we have to go through things? Why do we have to suffer? Why do bad things happen? I don't know how people make it through life without the Lord, without the promise and the hope of salvation, of Eternal Life free of pain and sorrow. I don't know how they do that? Well, actually I do because God loves them too even though they don't know Him and His grace is upon them. And though they do make it through life, it is not as full as it could be, blessed with the comforting Spirit of Christ.

Id like to share again from the Inspired Version, from the Book of John the words of Jesus Christ. *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you . . .* (John 15:10-16)

What I want to share with you this morning is something that the Lord has placed upon my heart this past week. I was really blessed at our prayer service

the week before last as I was administered to, for those of you who weren't there, and I feel like the Lord has truly blessed me and answered the prayers that were prayed. This week something has come into my mind. and hopefully I will get there in some fashion. We have a saying among us that the end justifies the means.

Have you heard that before? Have you really thought about that though? Does the end justify the means? Elyse, is there something so important that you would do anything to make it happen no matter what, whether it is good or bad? You don't know? Well, we're going to talk about that this morning. What do you think Jesus believes? Does Jesus believe that the end justifies the means and that we can do whatever we want? That might depend on what 'end' we're talking about.

Let's start at our end. As far as we know our end would be our salvation; and the means to achieve that salvation is Christ's death, separation from His Father and resurrection. So does the end justifies the means. Do you think it is justifiable that Christ should have to die in our place in order for us to have salvation? Do you think that's just? Do you think that's fair? I think we could argue that point couldn't we? Why should somebody else suffer for me? The fair thing I think would be for each one of us to be held accountable for the things that we do wrong.

When you get in trouble at home, Elyse, is it because of something that Samuel did? She replied, 'Yes.' (I knew she was going to say that. <smiling>)



Sometimes the actions of others entice us to do things that bring consequences upon ourselves. But ultimately we are responsible for the things that we do, good or bad; and that is because of the gift that God has given to us in our agency. Paul said in Romans 6:23, *For the wages of sin is death . . .* What that means, Elyse, is if you sin then your punishment is death. That's a pretty drastic punishment.

Now, we're talking about our end. Spiritual death and separation from God isn't really the end that God intended when He created us was it? Did He create us to be separated from Him? And what about what Alma said in Alma 19:107, . . . *do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice? I say unto you, Nay; not one whit. If so, God would cease to be God.* It's because of our own sin that we've been condemned to die. God's mercy cannot stop that penalty. His mercy cannot stop the demands of justice which demands death, separation from Him. Since God created us to be with Him, He did what was necessary to achieve the end or our salvation. His mercy claimed us and answered the demands of justice in our place. By dying for us Christ has made it possible for us to be reconciled with Him and to be WITH Him.

We read that by the water we keep the commandment. When we're baptized unto repentance, we're expressing our obedience to the command and the revelation of God. *By the Spirit we are justified, we are cleansed and we are made worthy heirs. By the blood of Christ we are sanctified and are made holy and fit to dwell and live with God because of Christ's sacrifice and covering of our sin.* (Genesis 6:63) Paul said that NOTHING can separate us from the love of God, neither death nor life, height nor depth. Death cannot separate us from His love. Jesus did not let His death stop Him from loving us and doing what He needed to do to love us completely. At the core, the very essence of love is SACRIFICE. Jesus said that there was no greater love than this that a man lay down his life for his friends. If you recall from the scripture Jesus said, 'Henceforth I no more call you servants but I call you friends.' He wanted to pre-

pare them here for something that he was getting ready to do, that He was going to lay down His life for His friends. Remember, everything that Christ did and said while He was on this earth had meaning and was to teach us about His gospel we know.

Did the end justify the means? It might not have been fair for Christ to die in our place but it was necessary. Justice demands there is death. Sin is a nasty separator. That's what it does. Sin separates us from each other and it can separate us from good things, from happiness. It separates us from God plain and simple. When we sin willingly and unknowingly we are basically turning our back to God and walking away from Him. Sometimes we walk a long ways. Sometimes we go just a short distance but in doing so we are creating a space between us and God—a space that we make by our own choices.

If you have been in an airport these days you have seen the moving sidewalks that carry you from terminal to terminal. They are kind of like an escalator if you haven't seen one, except they don't go up and down they just go right along the hallway. Sometimes when we sin we don't know it. We feel like we're going along good with God, doing what He has called us to do, but because we have sin in our lives we haven't acknowledged or choose to ignore it's like stepping on that moving sidewalk, except it's moving the opposite direction.

Our eyes might be focused on God, but that sidewalk just keeps creating more space between us and God. Then if you are like me, there are other times you jump on that moving sidewalk and turn around and run away. We run from the Lord from time to time, don't we? We know it but sometimes we don't want to admit to it. We try to hide that we know it but we do. In either case whether we do it knowingly or unknowingly it's our sin that separates us from God. So when Paul says that nothing can separate us from the love of God, really what he's saying is that though sin separates us from God there is no distance too great that God cannot see us and love us even from afar. No matter what we've done, no matter where we go

nothing can separate us from God.

If it were possible for us to live our entire life and sin only one time we'd still be allowing that sin to separate us from God, just one little sin thought everything else was perfect. That's hard to imagine isn't it? That one tiny sin would subject us to the penalty of it death and separation from God. Now you could say that God's love for us is so great that He can't stop loving us. It's kind of a nice thought because if you say God won't stop loving us then that kind of leaves room that maybe He might stop loving us at some point if He gets tired of us. But He won't stop loving us now and really God can't stop loving us, no matter what. It is in His nature. For me that's a comforting thought.

Sin doesn't just separate us from God though does it? It separates us from a lot of things. When there is something between you and your brother that keeps you apart, there is sin. If there's division between you and a sister, there's sin. If you and your spouse struggle in your relationship, there is sin. If there's tension between you and your children, there is sin; between you and your parents, there is sin. In fact, even when there's division between you and your classmates, friends, your co-workers, your boss, the person you meet on the street, there's an element of sin there. When we have ought against the waitress who gives us sloppy service and we are mad and upset, there's sin.

When we're divided it's because we've allowed sin to enter into our lives. I hadn't thought about that before really but it's true. Sin separates and so if we're not together it's because there is sin somewhere. When someone does something that offends us or hurts us that's sin. But really the greater issue at hand is that when we don't reconcile and when we can't come together and ask for forgiveness and forgive one another, that's really where the sin is. On the way over here this morning there were two girls in my car. I won't tell you their names so you won't know who they are but there was a disagreement which was very minor and petty, hardly worth mentioning. One may or may not have realized that she did something that offended the other. In the



grand scheme of things they are going to forget about that disagreement. But consider for a second that if they would allow that situation to drive a wedge between them so that they wouldn't reconcile or ever come together again that's where the real sin takes root. It lies in keeping us apart from one another and separating us.

The one thing I've learned about this life, (and you would think I had learned a lot more lessons before now), is that it's all about relationship. In our adult class this morning something was said about relationships. At the end Rob said that nobody wishes in the last six months of their lives they'd spent more time tending their cattle. You would wish that you had spent it with your loved ones building up those relationships, passing on that knowledge and sharing with each other. That's really all we'll ever take with us when we pass from this life into the next- our relationships. We'll take the things that we've done with us. We won't take all that stuff we've amassed. We won't take all those riches and all those treasures, per se, but we'll take the things that we have gained of value in our dealings with each other. That's really ultimately all we ever have - WHAT WE DO. When you strip everything else away we are what we've done. We are what we do. Sometimes that's not a very comforting thought for me. I've done things, said things that I don't like. I don't really want to take that with me because I don't like some of that which seems to be maybe a part of who I am, a part of what makes me up. When we let things come between us and others, we're allowing our relationships to suffer and when we do that we're diminishing the glory and any reward that we take with us into the next life.

Elyse, I used to think that the streets of heaven were paved with gold and there would be a choir singing on every corner. If you were really good maybe you would get a full orchestra with the choir and if you were not so good maybe it would be a little string quartet but that's not what it means by riches or glory. The riches and the glory that we receive are our relationships with each other. Now I'm sorry that you all got

stuck with having to have a relationship with me in this dispensation of time. It would have been much better maybe with Paul or Nephi or one of the other great men and women from the past, but really we are the ones with whom we have been placed here with for this time.

When Jesus died and was resurrected and came back, what was one of the first things that He did? He told them to come and feel the prints in His hands and feet. Come and feel the wound in His side. Jesus bears those scars today. Those are scars of glory. When you think about it He said that no greater love hath a man than to lay down his life for his friends. What greater glory or reward is there than love and to have that much love that He would willingly separate Himself from His Father for us? It's beyond my comprehension. I'm very thankful for it and hopefully someday I'll appreciate it as I really should. I like to think that I do now but I know that I don't.

When we talk about sacrifice what did Jesus do? He sacrificed Himself for us. We are called to do no less than to sacrifice ourselves for our friends, to give of ourselves. When we begin to live in sacrifice, and I think maybe you touched on it in the morning class, that's a Zionitic relationship. It's when we no longer live doing what we want to do and what's best for us in only our own interest. It even touches on that little discussion at the end of class where we were talking about seeking for riches. We won't seek for riches for ourselves. We won't seek for things so that we can consume them upon our lusts so that we can be happy within ourselves. We will seek for those things because we want to do something with them for others. We want to glorify God through our acts of service, through our sacrifice. We are saying 'this is not important to me but it's important to you and if it's important to you, I'm going to do it.'

Julia is not here this morning so I can talk about her. We celebrated our 20th wedding anniversary a couple of weeks ago. I didn't even buy her a card. That's pretty bad isn't it? I shouldn't have let it happen but I was busy. I in-

tended to but just didn't get it done. Now I'm sure nobody else here has ever done that. All we did is we went out and had dinner. She just told me last night, 'That was the best anniversary we ever had.' Do you want to know why? I did. She said, 'You talked. You told me all about your day. We got in the car and drove to Des Moines and you talked and talked and talked. We got in the restaurant and you talked some more.' I didn't even realize I was doing it. She said, 'I've been craving that.' She wants that relationship with me.

Most times I don't realize that I don't talk. I do that unknowingly sometimes but sometimes I don't talk because I don't want to. In fact, I may be sharing a little too much about myself here, but there have been times when I have thought that my wife should know what I need. She should know what I want.

We've known each other for 25 years and been married for 20 she should know these things. I should not have to tell her. Then I'll get obstinate and I won't say anything and I'll just go around the house doing what I want. Isn't that the stupidest thing? All the women here are shaking their heads



Michael Jordison



yes, maybe the men not so much. Men and women were created differently. I don't think anybody can deny that but Julia is seeking a relationship with me that involves communication. Maybe I don't want to do it, but it's important to her and if I am living in sacrifice as commanded, then I'm going to have to do it because IT'S IMPORTANT TO HER.

Often we talk about a Zioniac community, about a Zioniac lifestyle. Brothers and Sisters, it's really about communication isn't it. You can't be one with somebody that you don't know. I don't think it's possible. Now it's possible that you can know each other and not realize it but there has to be some communication in there somewhere and there has to be a common thread and a common core. We're never going to be completely right with God, until we can begin to be right with one another. And not just the ones that we like and who agree with us, but with everyone. Do you really think that in Enoch's city that no one ever did anything that annoyed another? I'm telling you that there is only ONE who is perfect and all those in Enoch's city weren't that one.

But relationships of trust and forgiveness have to be established and nurtured in every aspect of our lives - within our families, within our church community, within our places of school and work. And though relationships are between more than one individual - all we can be responsible is for our side of it. And grace, mercy and HUMILITY are at the very center of a Christ-like 'friend's' character. Can we be the friends He has called us to be if we lack those qualities-grace, mercy, humility?

When Jesus was with the disciples in the new world at Bountiful, after He baptized them and ordained them, as He was talking to them He told them to go pray and He was going to go pray too. Do you remember what He prayed? He prayed for His disciples. He said that He wanted to be in them. He wanted to be in them and one with them even as He was one with the Father. Then He prayed for the rest of us that we would be one with Him even as He was one with the Father. That's a re-

lationship isn't it? That's a very intimate relationship. Somebody said earlier, talking about grace, that we don't want grace because we don't want to be intimate with God because He might see us as we are. He might not like us. But that's what Paul was saying; that there's NOTHING that can separate us from the love of God.

If I told you, Sandy, that everybody in this room could read your mind; that they knew your innermost thoughts, your darkest secrets, that might terrify you. It would terrify me. If some of us thought that, we would probably run out that door and never come back. Thankfully we can't read each other's minds or know each other's darkest secrets. But God can. He knows everything that we've done, everything that we're doing now, everything that we're going to do and everything that we think about. He loves us still in spite of all that. That's pretty amazing. I don't like to use that word because teenagers today seem to use that word a lot, amazing, but it really is. It's awesome. It's cool. I don't know what the latest hip word is.

If we're going to continue to grow as a congregation, as a people, we have to begin to shore up those relationships one with another. We have to learn to talk to our spouses. We have to learn to talk to our children. Sometimes it will just be idle talk, just sharing about your day to start to open up those channels if you are not comfortable with communication, but there has to be some other communication too. If you look at Christ and the Church, the bridegroom and the bride, and if you look at your own relationship with your spouse you know there has to be some communication. It has to be two-way communication. And some of that communication has to be more than chit chat.

We talk about the gifts of the Spirit not being manifest today. God wants to bless us. He wants to give us those gifts. He wants to share with us but we have to be willing to receive. We have to be willing to communicate with Him. When Julia is not behaving or acting the way that I want her to should I withhold my love for her? When my children are not doing what I want them to

do should I withhold my love for them? No, and God doesn't do that with us either but He doesn't always give us the things that we think we need at that moment until we're ready to receive them. If we want to be part of the building of the kingdom, this growing, this nurturing, then we're going to have to begin to make some changes in our lives that will allow us to grow together with each other so that we can answer Christ's prayer and fulfill it when He says that we may be one even as He is one with the Father. We have to be one with each other and we have to forgive.

I had a dream this week. I don't know if it was a spiritual dream. I don't know if it was from something that I ate. It doesn't really matter but the dream I had impacted me enough that I got up early in the morning and began to think about some things. Some of the things that I've shared here this morning were born out of that. I'd really like to drive home this morning about how that experience is related to this Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints as established in 1830.

There are a lot of people in the church who have said things-I don't even know why I'm sharing this but it was very vivid to me. There are things that have been said, things that have been done that have caused division among the various groups of the Restoration. Some people have participated in ordinances that others disagree with. Some people have believed things about the Godhead that others think is just crazy or not scriptural. But, let me share this with you.

In 1894 at the RLDS General Conference the Saints got together and they were having a little bit of trouble deciding the direction of the Church. Finally, the Apostles went to Joseph Smith III and asked him to go to the Lord to find out what we should do. Joseph did and the Lord responded in Section 122:17b. At the beginning of that revelation the Lord acknowledges that the brethren had been dealing harshly with one another. And after he gives them the direction they were seeking He finishes and says this, *Let nothing separate you from each other and the work whereunto*



you have been called; and I will be with you by my Spirit and presence of power unto the end. Amen.

Let nothing separate you. We've got some differences of opinion, of thoughts, of what we believe the gospel says, what it is. But the command to all of us was to let nothing separate us. You might say this is taking the scripture out of context, but you can pray about that. There's really no room for those wedges to be driven. We don't have to agree on everything and we're not going to. I know that at least right now. We don't have to but if we don't learn to work together, knit in the bonds of love, we will not be a part of Zion.

It doesn't matter if we believe everything in the gospel as delivered from on High and pay our tithing every year. If we can't relate one to another in spite of our differences then we're never going to actually be a part of the work of the

kingdom. The Gospel is important. The truth and the ordinances of the church are important. The responsibility of the Priesthood to spare and protect and nourish the flock are important. But the end is not so important that we must abandon the principles of Christ in order to wield the sword of truth. We must uphold the first greatest commandment - to Love - and remember that at its core we must live in sacrifice one for another.

Brothers and sisters, I think that's what we need to remember right now. I think that's what the Church at large needs to remember. Once we are in obedience to this command, the truths of His word will be made manifest in order for us to grow Spiritually and Physically with One baptism, one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord and one faith.

Let's put aside our petty quarrels, strifes and differences and begin

to focus on building the kingdom and relationships, because I'm going to tell you that what's coming is not going to be good. We're going to be struggling and wishing for every single soldier that we can pull on to the field, every single soldier. There's no room for us to turn any away. That's what God wants from us. That's what He's looking for. He has put us in this dispensation of time in the midst of confusion and chaos. He has put us here for a purpose and he has put us here with each other - those whom you like and those whom you don't.

We need to discover what our individual purposes are and we need to move forward with our collective purpose to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion. If we can do that He promises that He will be with us by His Spirit and His presence of power. That's a beautiful promise.



Love Is in the Air

By Cathy Irvin

Well folks, it's that time of year again; you know - red hearts, pink roses, balloons, cards, candy, and animals that sing songs of love.

Store shelves overflow with symbols of love. They began the day after New Year's to get ready for Valentine's Day. Do you know that more roses are sold on that day than any other day in the year? All over the world, it is the day that people show their love for someone special.

Most mothers and wives hope to receive a loving momento, perhaps dinner in a nice restaurant, or to have a meal cooked for them. It is a great occasion to express love and appreciation for any of your loved ones, but it is just as important to show little acts of kindness the other 364 days of the year.

I can do without a dancing gorilla singing Love Me Tender, but I sure would miss getting that hug or kiss from my little great granddaughter when she says, "I love you GiGi." Or my son's nightly ritual when he says, "Good Night Mom. I love you." He says those are the last words he speaks when he is at home. I guess that is because we only have today. We

are not promised tomorrow.

When my daughter calls she always says "Bye, I love you." This is the best gift, day after day, just to know that I am loved.

It means a lot when family and friends want to spend time with you, share a meal, or just talk. God tells us in His Word how much He loves us. He promises never to leave or forsake us, to answer us when we call, day or night. He never slumbers nor sleeps. We need to tell Him how much we love Him 365 days a year as well.

Flowers will die. Candy gets eaten. Balloons will pop. Stuffed animals may stop singing. Cards may get lost or thrown away, but the love that is shared with one another, and God's love for us, will never pass away.

Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet My unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you. Isaiah 54:10

May you find little ways to show some acts of kindness to those you love before and after Valentine's Day this year.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Hebrews 10:24

Let love be in the air at all times!



ANNUAL FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING STATEMENT

"... Give an account of thy Stewardship," LUKE 16:2

This Statement covers the period from _____ through _____

LAST NAME _____	FIRST NAME _____	MIDDLE _____
SPOUSE: FIRST NAME _____	MIDDLE _____	
ADDRESS: _____		
TELEPHONE (____) _____	HOME BRANCH _____	

INCOME	
(A) SALARY, WAGES, SELF EMPLOYMENT EARNINGS (Before payroll deductions)	
INCOME from interest, dividends, stocks, bonds, or other investments	
INCOME from all rental properties, or other sources	
(X) TOTAL INCOME FOR REPORTING PERIOD	
BASIC LIVING NEEDS	
A SHELTER (Principle, Interest, Rent, Taxes, Insurance)	
B REPAIRS, Maintenance of property, necessary improvements	
C UTILITIES (electricity, gas, water, propane, coal, wood, telephone)	
D REPLACEMENT of Furniture, Appliances, and Household furnishings	
E FOOD (Groceries, Meals out, Lunches, Household Supplies, etc.)	
F TRANSPORTATION (Vehicle purchase, Interest, Upkeep, Tags/Fees, Insurance.)	
G REPLACEMENT and Upkeep of Apparel	
H MEDICAL CARE (Insurance, Doctors, Dentists, Rx's, glasses, etc.)	
I PERSONAL TAXES (Federal, State, Local, Social Security)	
J OTHER NECESSARY EXPENSES	
(Y) TOTAL NECESSARY LIVING EXPENSES	

- Items listed after each subsection are for example only. Each family must determine which components qualify as basic living expenses. This should be a decision based upon prayer and the influence of the Holy Spirit. The tithing statement reflects the "heart" condition of the steward more than mere compliance with the letter of the law.

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Accounting Time

It's time to think about making your annual financial accounting and sharing your tithing.

There are many promises of blessing if we will respond to the financial law. As a beginning, what would the blessing be if 50 percent of the Mount Ayr branch made their accounting this year? That would be a start. How about 100 percent of our members filing our accounting? We surely would be blessed by taking this first step.

Here are some scriptures to look at as you think about making your accounting.

Accountability to God

ROM 14:12 *So then everyone of us shall give account of himself to God.*

SEC 69:2a *And also my servants who are abroad in the earth should send forth the accounts of their stewardships to the land of Zion, for the land of Zion shall be a seat and a place to receive and do all these things.*

SEC 101:2 b., c.g. *It is wisdom in me; therefore, a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall organize yourselves, and appoint every man his stewardship, that every man may give an account unto me of the stewardship which is appointed unto him; . for it is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable, as stewards over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures. Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor, and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment.*

SEC 70:3b *And behold, none are exempt from this law who belong to the church of the living God . .*

SEC 72:1 c. *And verily in this thing ye have done wisely, for it is required of the Lord, at the hand of every steward, to render an account of his stewardship, both in time and in eternity.*

SEC 70:1 c. *And an account of this stewardship will I require of them in the day of judgment; wherefore I have appointed unto them, and this is their business in the church of God, to manage them and the concerns thereof; yea, the benefits thereof.*



February 2015 Schedule

Date	Feb. 1	Feb. 8	Feb. 15	Feb. 22	Mar. 1
Speaking	Rodney Bastow	Sherman Phipps	Tony Crandell	Tim Carr	Gordon Winkler
Presiding	Steve Smith	Rob Rolfe	Jim Major	Gordon Winkler	Sherman Phipps
Pianist	Pat Bolingbroke	Pat Bolingbroke	Pat Bolingbroke	Pat Bolingbroke	Pat Bolingbroke
Special Music	Ron Smith	Lynda Rolfe	Alan Smith	Bonnie Major	Steve Smith
Family Devotions	Alan Smith	Michael Jordison	Sherman Phipps	Jim Major	Bob Rowland
Greeters	Michael Jordison	Tony Crandell	Gordon Winkler	Sue Beck	Jim Major
Custodians	Sherman Phipps	Jim Barber	Rod Bastow	Ed Anderson	Rob Rolfe
Sunday Evening	Steve Smith	Bob Rowland	Ron Smith	Rob Rolfe	Steve Smith

	Feb. 4	Feb. 11	Feb. 18	Feb. 25	March. 4
Wed. Prayer Service					
Location	Ron Smith	Gordon Winkler	Rob Rolfe	Bob Rowland	Steve Smith
Presiding	Alan Smith	Jim Barber	Sherman Phipps	Steven Smith	Rob Rolfe

Special Events

Feb. 1- Potluck following Communion

Feb. 15.- Valentine Dinner provided by the youth group



Happy Birthday to Alan Elefson (1), Teegan Rowland (5), Beth Knotts, (11), Rodney Bastow, (22), and any others we missed.



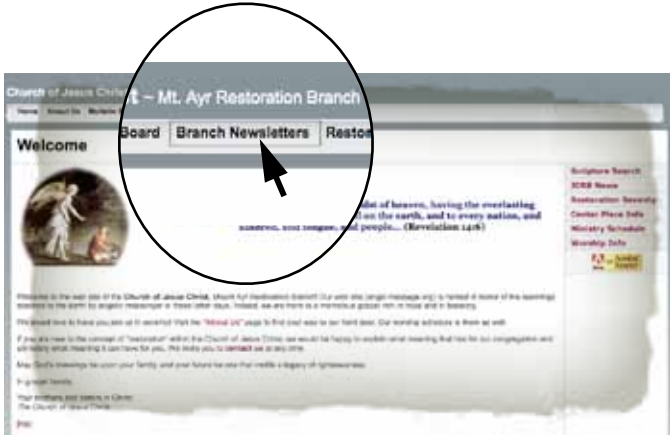
Happy Anniversary to Orlin and Ruth Thomas (22) and anyone else we missed.



Church of Jesus Christ Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

c/o Cheryl Phipps
15581 270th St
Lamoni, IA 50140

Have you misplaced your MARB Newsletter?
Want to read it online or search past issues?
Visit the Mount Ayr Restoration Branch website at:
www.gospelrestored.org



CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST - MT AYR RESTORATION BRANCH

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (Revelation 14:6-7)

MORE NEWS AND NOTES

Anyone who has not told the Crandells they plan to attend should do so as soon as possible as tickets will probably sell out.

Retreat being planned

A branch retreat will be held the weekend of March 20-22 at the Farwesta Reunion Grounds in Stewartville, MO.

We will gather at Stewartville Friday night, spend the day in activities Saturday and close with worship services on Sunday morning.

Plan now to attend this event.

We'll have more information next month.