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Church of Jesus Christ

Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

NEWSLETTER

2320 State Highway 2, Mount Ayr, IA 50854
Joel Loving, Pastor Lamoni Iowa

www.gospelrestored.org
@gospelrestored

*"I'll Fly Away, O glory.
I'll fly away"*



What's Inside:

Page

- 2 Patrick McKay
- 8 Sherman Phipps
- 12 Eric Woolery
- 18 An Invitation
- 19 Lynda Rolfe
Obituary



On Saturday, January 20, beloved member of MARB and friends and family joined together with an overflowing church to celebrate and remember the life of Lynda Suzanne Rolfe (page 19) who passed on to her reward. Lynda, a friend, will be greatly missed for her laughter, kindness, friendship, artistic talents and sense of direction. Our loss truly is heaven's gain.



BEING “ALL-IN”

Apostle Patrick McKay
Independence, Missouri
December 17, 2017

Priest Rodney Bastow opened the service with Luke 2:8-14 as a Call to Worship. *And there were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And lo, an angel of the Lord appeared unto them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. But the angel said unto them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this is the way you shall find the babe, he is wrapped in swaddling clothes, and is lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest; and on earth, peace; good will to men.*

Good morning. Joy and I are thrilled to be here. I have chosen to read as a scripture lesson from one of our former-day brethren, St. Augustine,

He is the One through whom all things have been made and, on Christmas, who has been made in the midst of all things.

He is the Revealer of His Father and the Creator of His mother; the Son of God through His Father without a mother and the Son of Man through His mother without a father.

He is great in the eternal day of the angels but small in the time-conditioned day of men.

He is the Word of God before all time and the Word made Flesh in the meridian of time.

Maker of the sun, He is made under the sun.

Disposer of all ages in the bosom of His Father; He consecrates Christmas Day in the womb of His mother. In Him, He remains while from her He goes forth.

Creator of the heavens and the earth, He is born on earth under the heavens.

Unspeakably wise, He is wisely speechless.

Filling the universe, He lies in a manger. Ruler of the stars, He nurses at His mother's bosom.

He is both great in the nature of God and small in the form of a servant, but His greatness is not diminished by His smallness nor His smallness overwhelmed by His greatness.

May God add His blessing to the reading of these words is my prayer.

He is both great in the nature of God and small in the form of a servant, but His greatness is not diminished by His smallness nor His smallness overwhelmed by His greatness. I think these are remarkable words that St. Augustine penned. I think they capture for me the power, the glory, the simplicity, the humility of our Lord Jesus, His entrance into this world, what He did, how He left and what He yet purposes to do.

This morning I'd like to share with you several words that are associated with the Christmas story. We read about His birth. We read about Simeon, Mary, Bethlehem, Ephratah, the manger, swaddling clothes, shepherds and even the Passover. As we review these words they paint for us a prophetic picture of the significance of this story we call Christmas. These words elicit for us a foreshadowing of who this Jesus is and what He purposes to do. Everything that is written is written to bear witness of Him.

You know Christmas is celebrated on December 25th. It has a long and storied tradition among us and we rejoice in it. But was Jesus really born in December? Some prefer to believe instead He was born in the fall. As we examine the historical record, both sacred and profane, I think that we will find a little bit different story about what really transpired and why.

You know there are midwinter celebrations that have been observed all over the world for eons. In Egypt Osiris is said to have died and been reborn on the Winter Solstice. In Greece there is the solstice day called Lenaea and it's believed to be a time when Dionysos, a Greek god, died and was torn apart and then he was reborn. The Incas had the Festival of the Sun. The Pueblos, Hopis and many other Native Americans had similar traditions. They all observed these Winter Sun Solstices. The Romans had Saturnalia. In fact there were so many different sun deities connected with the Winter Solstice in Rome that Roman emperor Aurelian in about 270 AD officially rolled them into one single day on December 25th and called it “**The Birthday of the Sun.**” The practice of lighting fires on the longest night, encouraging the sun to come back has been practiced since prehistoric times.

The 25th of December is also associated with the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is an amalgamation of so many, many different beliefs, practices, concepts, traditions both Christian and pagan. The Catholic or the Roman Church came up with the term Christ Mass or Christmas. A mass is something that's offered when someone dies. They use to have the sale of indulgences but now they have masses. You can go the priest if a loved one has passed away and pay the priest and he will hold a mass. They will light candles and pray for your loved one because they believe that every person including the pope go to purgatory when they die. Those lit candles and those prayers free your loved one from that time of purification that takes place in purgatory so the more you pay, the more candles are lit then the sooner they get out.

That's where the term Christ-mas came from. It was during this period of ascendancy in the Roman Empire that Christmas originated. Consequently you find pagan Roman customs associated with this most glorious day that we celebrate as the birth of Christ. In general its season coincides with other superstitions of the Northern European barbarians who were exiled children of Israel. They also worshipped the sun and marked the Solstice and played a large part in its development. We have Christmas trees and yule logs. These are all part of these pagan trappings but we have them in our home and enjoy them. I just want us to understand there is a little bit of history as to how these came about. I do believe that the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ can transcend all of these trappings and we can bear witness of Him.



The scriptures, I believe, give us evidence of a spring birth and not a fall or December birth. Part of the scripture that was read earlier says, *And there were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.* (Luke 2:8) The Apostle Paul tells us that all things written are ensamples or examples for us and upon those whom the end of the world should come. They are written for our admonition.

When God instituted the Passover He expressly did so to testify of Jesus Christ. You recall they were commanded to kill a lamb and put the blood on the doorposts so that when the death angel passed over in Egypt and saw that blood he would pass over. Of course, Pharaoh didn't have it on his doorpost and his oldest son died and that's what eventually encouraged him to let the children of Israel go.

Passover

The Passover is emblematic of the spilled blood of Jesus. If we have the blood of Christ, if we've been washed in the waters of regeneration and cleansed by the blood of Christ, the destroying angel will pass over us also and we will be saved in the everlasting Kingdom of the Lamb because of the blood that was shed of Calvary for you and me.

It was an ancient custom among the Jews to send out their sheep into the field or the desert shortly before Passover, which is held every spring. It's not the same day every year because they are on the lunar calendar. They have a 13-month cycle. We have a 12-month Gregorian cycle and ours are fixed. You notice Easter one

year is in March and in another year it is in April. That's because the date when Easter falls is based on the lunar calendar.

The shepherds would go out and stay in the fields with their flocks until the commencement of the first rain or until the fall began. This corresponds with the scripture giving evidence of a spring birth. *And there were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.* (Luke 2:8) According to the Bible Jesus' birth was prophetically forecast in the securing of the paschal lamb. We read in Exodus 12:2-5: *This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month* (which was the month of Abib later referred to as Nisan) *they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a house; And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year; ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats. This lamb was to be found on the 10th day of the first month. He was to be kept for 4 days and on the 14th day he was to be killed and they were to eat his blood in haste and put the blood on the doorpost. And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper doorpost of the houses, wherein they shall eat it . . . it is the Lord's passover.* (Exodus 12:6-7, 11)

The Passover was eaten with unleavened bread because leaven represented sin and so it was without sin. It was bread that didn't rise perhaps more like a cracker. It was free from yeast or fermentation signifying the sinless nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. The shepherds were to find a yearly lamb that was without spot or unblemished. They were to find it on the 10th and slay it on the 14th. It was a covenant that was to be intact forever for the children of Israel. Today it is still observed by you and me on the first Sunday of every month when we partake of the Lord's supper. Paul said, *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened* (so we have sin). *For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.* (1 Corinthians 5:7)

Since Jesus is our Passover the prophetic type is clear. He was born on the 10th day of the first month, killed on the 14th day and lay in the tomb parts of three days. He rose on the 16th. He rose on a Sunday, the Lord's Day not the Sabbath, the 7th day of the week, but He rose on the Lord's Day. That's why we celebrate Sunday. We're not Sabbatarian's but we worship on the Lord's Day Sunday. The first month Abib means an ear of corn. It's the month of the newly ripened grain. It's the springtime. It began about the time of the vernal or spring equinox, when Passover occurs.

On the 15th day of the month the high priests would gather a sheaf of barley and it would be waved on the next morning, on the 16th. It would be the first fruits of the new harvest. Jesus rose before the priests waved the barley sheaf for the new harvest because He was the first fruits of them who slept.

All of that is really interesting but what does it have to do with Christmas you might ask. One thing I might also add is that the





Book of Mormon confirms this testimony. Unlike the Hebrew calendar, the Nephites began to reckon their time from the time the sign was given, when the new star appeared and there was a day and a night and a day as if there had been no night. *Now the Nephites began to reckon their time from this period when the sign was given or from the coming of Christ.* (3 Nephi 1:45) So on the Nephite calendar Jesus was born on the first day of the first month and He was crucified on the 4th day of the 34th year and He rose on the 16th day of the first month. *And now it came to pass, if there was no mistake made by this man in the reckoning of our time, the thirty and third year had passed away, and the people began to look with great earnestness for the sign which had been given by the prophet Samuel, the Lamanite. ... And it came to pass in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, in the fourth day of the month, there arose a great storm, such an one as never had been known in all the land.* (3 Nephi 4:3,6) There was a great tumult in the Americas when Jesus was crucified on the 4th day of the month or the 14th day of Abib. I often like to say that the church was restored one thousand eight hundred thirty years from the coming of our Lord and Savior in the flesh.

Manna

Now the word **manna** is quoted often in the Old Testament. What role would manna play in our Christmas story? Moses reminded the children of Israel about manna. *And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.* (Deuteronomy 8:3) Jesus was the word of God. Jesus was the manna that came down from heaven. That is the manna that we should eat so that we live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God. Jesus went on to say, *But I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.* (John 6:51) *And the same word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.* (John 1:14)

Jesus was the living bread. He represents unleavened bread or pure bread. He is the bread, which came down from heaven. *Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. But I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.* (John 6:50, 51) You know that's a hard saying in John the 6th chapter where He says except you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life. After that some of the disciples followed Him no more. That was a strange thing. They weren't cannibals who would eat His flesh and blood.

We read in the first edition of the printed revelations of the early Restoration that it says, referring to the bread and wine, that they were the flesh and blood of Christ. In 1835 when the Doctrine and Covenants was codified there was a prophetic inundation made in that revelation and it referred to the bread and wine as the emblems of the spilled blood and broken body of Jesus. Both are true but one amplified our understanding. You know you take the bread and you break it and bless it. It's still bread but when it is

prayed over by one having authority and it is internalized we actually take upon us the life of Christ. *Let this light be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. If any man shall eat this bread he shall never die. He shall live forever.*

Through the gospel Jesus offers eternal life to those of us who eat this bread. The children of Israel ate manna in the wilderness and they died. Through this ordinance of the Lord's Supper in His house the Holy Spirit sustains us in our wilderness with the promise of everlasting life.

Hopefully the Christmas story will build for you as I talk about Bethlehem and Ephrathah. I am just trying to lay a foundation. The wise men came to Herod and asked where the Messiah was that was born King of the Jews. Herod's chief priests went and looked in the records and they found the words of Micah. *But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.* (Micah 5:2) The word ephrathah means fruitfulness. Ephraim means a double portion. An Ephrathite was an Ephraimite. Ephrathah is the original name of Bethlehem. Due to its fruitfulness Ephrathah's name was changed to Bethlehem, which means house of bread. Isn't that interesting! Bethlehem, the place where our Lord and Savior was born, means house of bread. Who was Jesus? He was the bread of life that came down out of heaven. *If any man eats this bread he shall live forever.*

Shepherds

The shepherds were in their field watching over their flocks by night. They were doing something important. They were looking for the paschal lamb. They were looking for that lamb that was without spot because it was Passover time and they had to secure the lamb for the Passover meal. This is why the angel appeared to them. He didn't just say, 'Hey, I'm an angel. I'm going to go visit some shepherds in the field and tell them that Jesus is born.' He visited these shepherds because they were in the process of looking for the paschal lamb. They were looking for that lamb that testified of the Lamb of God that would take away the sins of the world.

The angels appeared to them and after they left they made haste and found the babe lying in a manger. A manger is a feeding trough. Consider the imagery. Our Lord Jesus, the bread of heaven born in Bethlehem, the house of bread, found in a manger, a feeding trough, to be partaken of by those who wish to inherit eternal life. That's remarkable! Jesus our Lord was born in that environment, placed in a manger because it's a prophecy of who He is and what He offers to you and I, the bread of heaven. Jesus was not born in a house of royalty or a house of riches or a house of celebrity. He was not born in Rome or Athens or Alexandria. He was not born in any political, commercial, cultural or educational advanced state or socially significant city of the day. When Micah told that the birth of Jesus would be in Bethlehem he emphasized this statement. *But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.* (Micah 5:2) Out of a little place God would bring forth the Son of God who would be a ruler in Israel. Jesus the bread of life was born in Bethlehem, the house of bread,



simply to satisfy our spiritual hunger. Doesn't Jesus gratify and satisfy and strengthen us spiritually even as bread that we eat to sustain us does? Wheat is referred to as the staff of life and out of it we make all of our bread products. Nephi's words should reverberate with us this morning when he said, *Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.* (2nd Nephi 14:4)

I'm going to share a little testimony here. I met Joy and she was immediately taken with me as you can imagine. I saw her at a distance. I was out hunting and fishing for somebody. I saw her at the campus in Independence where we used to have volleyball and swimming and softball. I thought, 'I don't know who she is. I don't know if she's single, married, divorced or widowed but I'm going to find out.' I walked up to her and introduced myself and got her phone number. The next day I called her. I had no money and I didn't even have a car. I had just sold my car and was waiting on my mother. My mom had a tendency to be late except the day I was born. I was premature. Every other day she was late. I called Joy and asked her to go out with me. I asked her to go to the Mormon pageant in Independence and she said, 'Absolutely not.' That was the only free thing that I knew that we could do. I thought, 'what am I going to do? I don't want to hang up because this could be my last chance.' I stayed on the phone and finally we settled on a date to play tennis. She asked me when I was coming and I said, 'I'm not sure. I'll get there when I can.' I got a car and came over and found Joy and she had just taken curlers out of her hair and I knew I had gotten to her. You don't curl your hair to play tennis.

I liked her a lot and we dated some. I read the scripture, *Men are that they might have joy* but I knew that wasn't the answer. I had read that if I feasted on the words of Christ that they would tell me all things that I should do. A couple of months went by and I was reading in Alma the 16th chapter. It said if you take a seed and it's a good seed and you plant it and nurture it, it will grow and swell and you will know that it is a good seed and a light bulb went off. I went to Joy and I said, 'I want my people to be your people. Will you come to church with me? Will you pray with me? Will you read with me?' She acquiesced to those things and one year to the day from when I met her we were married. I believe that scripture that we should feast upon the words of Christ and it will tell us ALL things whatsoever we should do.

Following their visit to the stable the shepherds began to noise abroad what they had heard. *And when they had seen, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.* (Luke 2:17) These shepherds represent for us the ministry, those called to declare the gospel, the good news of the Lord Jesus. The angel spoke to the shepherds and the shepherds spoke the word to the sheep or to the people. Today we declare that an angel has flown through the midst of heaven having the everlasting gospel. That he has appeared unto some and he will yet appear unto many. The Lord promised through the prophet Jeremiah in the last days, *And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord.* (Jeremiah 23:4)

The Lord's promise to gather Israel hasn't happened yet. All of Israel will be saved the scriptures say. He's calling shepherds, men

of the ministry, servants to declare the good news. Behold, born unto you this day in the city of David is the Savior Christ the Lord. So they went and saw Him. We're to see Jesus. We men of the ministry are to so order our lives that we can see our Lord; that we can converse with the angels; that we can relay on earth that which we overhear in heaven; that the residue of men may have faith and believe. So He says He will raise up shepherds, ministers, men of God to declare the glad tidings. These shepherds represent the ministry. The angel spoke to the shepherds. The shepherds spoke the word to the sheep or to the people.

Swaddling Clothes

Swaddling clothes: How many of you sisters have given birth? After you go into the hospital and give birth sometimes they give you a blanket and you wrap your youngster up in it and hold him tight. In telling the story the shepherds must have mentioned that they found the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. Babes were wrapped from their shoulders to their feet with long strips of cloth four to five inches wide and fifteen to twenty feet long. The act of wrapping a child up so tightly was to secure the baby to ensure that he would grow up free from crookedness and waywardness. You know by partaking of the bread of heaven you and I can be strait. We can enter the strait gate and enter into the kingdom of God. Like Jesus we can become royal members of the kingdom of God, royalty, sons and daughters of God by obeying the gospel.

In hospitals today they give out a cloth, a blanket and the mother swaddles her baby or at least that's the term. Swaddling clothes have nothing to do with the child being born. In the Middle East people sometimes would die when traveling long distances. They couldn't continue to carry that person that long way so **if** they had swaddling cloth they would wrap the body in the swaddling cloth. They would wrap him in a thin gauze-like cloth around his waist many times. If someone died on the journey others would use cloth referred to as swaddling to wrap the corpse in before burying them.

When Jesus was born there was none to give room for Him in the inn so Mary and Joseph went to a nearby stable. With no other cloth to use Jesus was wrapped in Joseph's cloth, his burial cloth. The King of Kings the Lord of Lords came into this world in a lowly manger and was wrapped in burial clothes. Jesus, our Lord, was born to die, to die for the sins of all mankind. Not only did the cloth he was swaddled in keep Him strait it prophesied of His real purpose. Jesus came to die. Isn't that remarkable? Every aspect of this story bears witness of Him.

Mary

What about His mother Mary? Have you ever considered why she named her Mary? You know Mary probably was about 14 years old when she gave birth to Jesus. Today we would think that was terrible but that was customary in those days. She gave birth to a child out of wedlock. She was espoused to Joseph, that means she was engaged to him, but they were not married. What would you



say if your 14 year-old daughter came home and she was pregnant and said, 'Well, an angel appeared to me and told me that that which has happened is of the Holy Ghost.' You wouldn't believe her. How many people believed Mary?

And when the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished; they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; As it is written in the law of the Lord, every male which openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord; And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is written in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons. And behold, there was a man at Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child, even Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. (Luke 2:22-32)

What a wonderful story. Joseph and Mary bring the babe to Simeon who had already been visited by the Holy Spirit, which prompted Simeon to go into the temple. There he beholds the Christ child, the consolation of Israel. Now he can depart in peace. Mary heard this prophecy and how her heart must have been rejoicing but then he goes on to prophecy to Mary and her dreams are dashed. He talks about the burden that she will carry as the mother of the Son of God. *Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; Yea, a spear shall pierce through him to the wounding of thine own soul also; that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. (Luke 2:34-35)* Wow! Her child is going to be pierced and it's going to pierce her own soul.

Mary is the Greek expression of the Hebrew word Miriam. The word means bitterness; hard to bear; grievous, distressful; a bitter sorrow, causing pain; piercing; and stinging. That's the meaning of that name. Mary had a really difficult burden didn't she? She not only was 14 years old and bearing a child out of wedlock and no one believing her. Joseph a just and devout man thought to put her away privately because of the scorn that was upon her. Then she gets this prophecy that they're going to stick a spear through Him and it was going to wound her own soul. You know Mary's labor brought forth Jesus the Word of God. Mary was told that she would feel that piercing as it was thrust into Jesus' soul. Her bitter struggle to birth the word of God was painful. There was scorn and ridicule, to see Him rise and then see Him crucified.

But for you and me it is the same. Do we battle to bring forth the word of God in our lives and is it painful? Do we search and ponder the scriptures? Do we view them in light of our own sinful natures? Do we try to write the Word of God upon the tables of our heart? Do we study to *show ourselves workmen that needeth not to be ashamed that we might rightly divide the word of truth?* Are we confounded by God's word? Do we feast upon it? Do we believe



His Word will tell us all things whatsoever we can do? It's difficult to birth the Word of God in our lives, to lay down our own sinful nature and take up the life and ministry of Jesus within us. So it was with Mary. She's a prophetic type of you and me. When we take the Word of God and internalize it in our lives; it can be bitter; it can be sorrowful; it can separate us from people; it can cause us to be lonely; it can cause us to walk a path that most people don't walk, but there is joy. It's a struggle to birth the Word of God in our lives just as it was for Mary to birth the Lord Jesus.

Simeon

You know Simeon blessed God. He held God. Jesus Christ was called Emanuel, God with us. He was God in the flesh. He was Jesus Christ the Son of God, born of a virgin and Simeon held Him. The name Simeon means to hear and to harken. Simeon waited for the consolation of Israel. He wanted to see the Lord's Christ. When we hear and harken to the word of God we become Simeon's and like Simeon we can bless God as well as be blessed of Him and we become the elect.

Latter-day revelation says who the elect are. The elect are those who hear His voice and harden not their hearts. Are we the elect? The scripture says if it were possible even the very elect could be deceived but the elect can't be deceived because they hear and they harken. They have been like Mary. They have birthed the Word of God within their lives. Like Simeon they become the elect. They hear and they harken. We need Simeon's in the church today. We need Mary's in the church today. The Apostle Paul counseled, *"Wherefore, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."* (2 Peter 1:10) We can choose to be elected.

When I was a youngster in California we used to play baseball all day long. We would pick sides. We'd maybe have four, five or six on a team. Two people would pick players and the last person picked was always the worst player. No one ever wanted to be the last person picked but you know unlike what we do as little boys when we pick sides and pick our teams and want to win, Jesus allows us to elect to be elected. He gives us the opportunity to choose Him. He has already chosen us but we have to choose Him.



So it's the elect according to the covenant and we can choose to be chosen. We can choose to be the elect if we become like the Simeon's and we hear and harken to the Word of God.

For many Christmas is a time to think about Jesus as a babe in a manger. We should celebrate that. We should marvel at that. The lightbulb should go on for us when we see all of the prophetic trappings that come to us in the story of Jesus and His birth. While the birth is special and while it is miraculous, it isn't the primary focus. The central truth of the Christmas story is that Mary brought forth the Son of God who as called Emanuel, meaning God with us.

I have a friend in the Church of Jesus Christ Bickertonites. She's perhaps 81 years old. She has had a gift of receiving songs for 40 years. They are prophetic songs. She's not musical. She can't play an instrument. She can't read music. She doesn't sing. Yet she has been given a gift. She's been given over 230 songs, every note and every word. From one of her songs of Zion I want to read to you some of these moving words.

*In the name of Jesus Christ the captives are set free.
In the name of Jesus Christ the tempter has to flee.
In that precious Holy name, a life He's touched is never the same;
He's wonderful and He's marvelous to me.
Refrain:
Oh, He's wonderful! He's wonderful
He's marvelous! He's marvelous!
He touches the night with His love and His light
And He makes it shine like the noonday bright,
He's the Cornerstone; He's the Rock of Ages,
He's a Solid Foundation when Satan rages;
He's everything; He's all the world to me.*

*In the name of Jesus Christ my sins were washed away,
In the name of Jesus Christ my nights were turned to day.
From the stable brought to fame, my closest friend is one and the same;
He's wonderful and He's marvelous to me.*

I might just share she received 53 songs over a three-year period. She wrote all of the words down but she didn't know how to put a note on the page. Many told her that she had a gift and so and so could help her put that to music. She said, 'No, if the Lord wants that He'll have to send somebody.' Her congregation prayed about this and the next day a man in Detroit, she lived in the Pittsburg area, heard a voice three times. He had met Arlene ten years previously but he didn't really know her. He was a member of her church. He is a musician and he was told to go see her. He did and got to her house at 9 o'clock on a Friday night. He asked her, 'Now how do you want to begin in the morning? Do you want to get up and work for a few hours and then have something to eat or do you want to eat first and then go to work?' She said, 'No, I've waited three and a half years, we are starting right now.' They sat down at the piano and he put up some paper. She had her words there. She would hum a note and he would hit a note and she would say,

'That's what I heard.' Or 'That's not what I heard.' They went through 9 songs over that weekend.

We all know and realize that Christmas has some unusual characteristics to it that maybe we don't really share or that we wouldn't support. Maybe they are not codified in the word of God is the best way to say it but the Holy Spirit transcends all of these trappings to bear witness of our Lord, the power of His life. If you go into a mall or shopping center you might hear some of the hymns of the Christmas songs being played. There is a wonderful joy. There's a cadence that quickens. There's a vision that opens up. There's some inspiration that we feel this time of year. We know there's commercialism. We know that the Grinch tried to steal Christmas and it really wasn't packages, it was really what was in our hearts. There is something special about this time of year because the whole world, the whole Christian world pays some attention to Jesus even though maybe not as much as they should, not as much as they could.

The Christmas story should cause us to look with new vision especially as Latter-Day Saints. We have so much to add to the story. There's a little song I like called "Green and Silver, Red and Gold."

*Green and silver, red and gold
And a story born of old.
Truth and love and hope abide,
This Christmastide...*

*From a simple ox's stall
Came the greatest gift of all
Truth and love and hope abide,
This Christmas tide...*

I believe as the tide raises all ships, the experience of Christmas tide can raise us up into heavenly places. We can testify of Jesus, His love for us, His gift, but He didn't just come to be born. He came to die wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger that He might feed the nations of the earth as He testifies of His broken body and spilled blood to win you and me to the kingdom of God. May God bless you. May His Spirit rain in your lives and at Christmas time especially may we be inspired. Let us read again the story in Luke and the story in Helaman and 3rd Nephi. Let's marry them together and understand that this gospel that we believe in is life changing and has the power to not only transform you and I but our society also. Soon God is going to make bare His arm and He's going to come forth and demonstrate in power and glory and great wonder.

There are so many things I'd like to share this morning. I wanted to talk about Christmas but I can tell you the gospel is beginning to go forth. We're promised in Section 58 that the gospel would go to the rich, the learned, the wise and the noble nations. He said *and then cometh the day of my power and it shall go to the halt, the poor, and the blind nations of the earth.* (D&C 58:3). God is opening the door as He promised and the gospel is beginning to go to these poor nations and men and women are accepting, embracing, and believing the gospel.



I just came back from a trip to Africa. They are poor. That's their birthright. They have nothing. They live in huts that are very much like they used 200 years ago. Every now and then you might see a solar panel on their roof. That's about it. But they've heard the gospel and they are responding.

We baptized a man in Zimbabwe. He is the only elder in the whole country. We baptized him and ordained him and shared the gospel with him and his little group. He was a Pentecostal minister. The day before we left we were visiting, trying to instruct him, giving him as much help as we possibly could because once we were gone he was on his own.

He said, 'I want to bear my testimony. In 2007 I had a little congregation in my little village of Hope Fountain. I got in touch

heard the true gospel. I want to be baptized.' We came home and then went back two and a half months later and Kenneth had baptized 70 people in a village. They had built a baptismal font in the ground with no drain. When we got there there were frogs and other critters living in the water. They believed the story and built this liquid grave and 70 souls were baptized. When we came we confirmed those people. One morning during the Sunday morning service we confirmed 61 people.

God is on the move. He's making bare His arm. He's proving the nations with the restored gospel. We have the greatest story but it's never been told. This morning I encourage you, I implore you to see how you can assist in this work. It's going to go forth whether you or I are part of it or not. The train has already left the station. It's going down the road and picking up steam and He's anxious to make bare His arm to the nations of the earth.

May God bless you, may His Spirit abide with you and may you have a wonderful Christmas. May this Christmas tide raise us all in my prayer, in Jesus name. Amen.



with the group across town and I began ministering to them also.' That was in 2007 and in 2011 he began to have some doubts about the gospel, not that he didn't believe it but he had questions about it. He also found it difficult to sustain both groups. It was expensive for him and he has no money to travel across town.

One day a lady from Faith Apostolic Pentecostal church in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe came to his village. She had prayer with him and after the prayer she prophesied to him. She said, 'Brother Kenneth, do not worry. The true gospel will come to you and it will be brought by white men.' That was in 2011. In 2016 Randy Vick and Rex Curtis met a man in Malawi. He had looked for the Book of Mormon for 10 years. His name was Kingsley Zacharias. They baptized him and ordained him an elder. He posts on Facebook. Maybe some of you have seen the Blantyre Restoration Branch there in Malawi. He put up a scripture one day but it didn't say where it came from, but it was from the Book of Mormon. This man Kenneth in Zimbabwe saw that and it tingled in his ear and caused his heart to rejoice. He got in touch with Kingsley and they began communicating and before long six months went by. Kingsley made a visit to Kenneth and shared with him that passage from the Book of Mormon. He said, 'There are missionaries coming from America. Do you want them to come to your congregation?' He said, 'Yes, I very much want them to come.'

When we came we taught the gospel. There were 39 people that asked to be baptized and Kenneth was the first. He said, 'I have

Thanksgiving, worship, gratitude,

These are things we lift to You.

Let us fill our hearts with your Spirit to do your work.

Keep our minds open to Your revelations

In these latter days.

We praise Your name, we praise Your name!

CAN YOU IMAGINE?

High Priest Sherman Phipps

Lamoni, Iowa

January 7, 2018

Elder Gordon Winkler opened the service with Romans 6:1-4. *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*



Good morning, everybody. I'm glad to see you here this morning. I want to read first a scripture from the Doctrine and Covenants Section 61. If you are familiar with Isaiah, parts of chapter 41, you'll hear a very similar message here. The Lord says, *And now verily I say unto you, and what I say unto one I say unto all, Be of good cheer, little children, for I am in your midst, and I have not forsaken you, and inasmuch as you have humbled yourselves before me, the blessings of the kingdom are yours.* (6c) In fact if you go back and look at Section 59 He makes it clear that these blessings that He is talking about are not only spiritual blessings but they are also earthly blessings. When people will look to Him and choose to be His, everything is His to give to them and He does. Section 61 goes on and says, *Gird up your loins* (I had to go look that up. I wondered what that really meant. I think what I got out of my little bit of research was that He's telling us to humble ourselves. Give ourselves over to Him. Girding up your loins was a process where people would strip themselves down and then put on sackcloth and throw ashes over themselves. It is to come before the Lord as you truly are and to acknowledge your nothingness, be humble before Him and then be open to His direction and in fact, beg Him, like we are here this morning, to forgive us and to allow us to continue to be a part of His people.) Anyhow He says, *Gird up your loins and be watchful, and be sober, looking forth for the coming of the Son of man, for he cometh in an hour you think not. Pray always that you enter not into temptation, that you may abide the day of his coming, whether in life or in death.* (6d-e)

Well, this is a new year. What are we going to do with this new year? There are kind of two parts to that. On the one hand it's a new year so we have this year before us but some of us can look at that and say, 'yes and it's also a warning that we need to be doing something with every day we have because it is another new year and there's another one that has gone past so we need to get focused.' I should probably sit down and let Brother Joel talk to you about what it means to have another new day. He's very grateful for that and we're very grateful for that.

Where do we go from here in this new year? There is a true story recorded in the book of Ether That I believe has many similarities to our present situation. It has to do with a fellow named the Brother of Jared. Probably most of us are familiar with this story but I was reading it again and I thought, 'Boy, there's a lot of good advice in there for us.' You know it's like that with the word of the Lord. I don't know how the Lord does this but when He speaks He may be speaking to one group at a specific time but what He says is applicable to everybody throughout time. It's amazing to me how that can be so. You will see an example of this if you go back and read Jeremiah. I have mentioned before I had quite an experience with reading Jeremiah and realized, through the working of the Spirit, how when Jeremiah spoke those words to that particular group of people, he actually saw how those words applied to all people all down through the ages and they do. If we go and read them under the influence of the Spirit they come alive and they are not just applicable to that group of people. They tell us something about our lives and how we need to be living them now.

For some reason we are never told what Jared's brother's name was other than the Brother of Jared. This story starts at the Great Tower or the Tower of Babel. We have that story in the Bible and it tells us how the language of the people was confused, but in the Book of Mormon we have the history of one little small group that went out from there. We're told that Jared went to his brother because apparently he considered his brother to be kind of the spiritual leader of the family. He went to him and told him to ask the Lord if He would spare the brothers and their families from this curse that had come upon the people so that they would be able to communicate and understand each other.

So the Brother of Jared went and spoke to the Lord and prayed to Him and asked Him for this privilege and the Lord granted it and said that He would not confuse the language between Jared's family and the Brother of Jared's family. Then he asked if it might be possible that He would also spare their friends. The Lord also agreed to not confuse the language of these two brothers and some of their closest friends so they were able to continue to communicate with each other. If you think about that it's very important.

In the Restoration we've had some of this same problem I think, maybe for the same cause. What was the problem at the Tower of Babel? They were trying to build a tower to get to heaven on their own. They didn't think they needed God. They had quit looking to God as God and decided to build their own structure, their own tower. That's kind of what we have done in the Restoration I fear. We began to think of ourselves as chosen people. Somehow we have perceived ourselves as special people who could build the kingdom according to our own standards and based on our own wisdom. We began to look to ourselves for guidance and direction instead of looking to God.

At some point as a group in the Restoration we began to not understand each other. As a result we went different directions just like these people did. I don't want to get into this too much other than to say that at some point then Jared and his brother and these other families were told by the Lord to leave the place where the Tower of Babel was being built and go down into a valley that was not too far away. When they got there the scriptures tell us that the Lord came down and talked with the Brother of Jared. He was in a cloud so the Brother of Jared didn't actually see Him but he could hear His voice. They had already left the area of the Tower of Babel but they didn't know exactly where they were going from there. Like us, today, they were willing to leave where they had been and follow the Spirit's guidance, but they were not sure where this would take them.

They did go to the valley where the Lord had told them to go. When they got there the Lord spoke with the Brother of Jared and He told him that what He had in mind for this people was to take them to a choice land. A land that would be blessed above all other lands, a land of promise. It would be a nation where whoever would possess that nation and that land and serve and worship God would be maintained free from all other nations, free from captivity and bondage. But, if they failed to serve the Lord then they would be swept off the land eventually when the fullness of God's wrath came upon them.



We, of course, believe that that land to which they were brought was the Americas and this is a choice land above all other lands. It is so not because we're great people, not because we're smarter, harder working than anyone else but it's choice and blessed because the Lord has decreed it to be so as long as we worship God.

The Lord told the Brother of Jared that they would need to begin by building some barges. They needed to build the barges so that they could cross a sea. Then He told him that when they got to that point that wasn't the end because that wasn't the promised land. They were going to have to go further than that. They built the barges and crossed that sea.

As I read this story again I realized that some of us have had to come out from where we were, come out from where we thought we were right. It's taken some work but we've been brought to this point in the work of the Restoration. But we're still not where we need to be. I would like to equate this morning, if you'll allow me to do so, Zion with this land of promise that He was talking to the Brother of Jared about. We've been promised if we would become obedient that we would be a part of Zion. That's a promise made to everybody, not just to a few of us here. Those who will be obedient to the Lord and will truly learn to walk in His paths will be a part of God's Zion when He establishes it here on the earth.

We have had that information for a long time and others have had that information but it doesn't seem to me like we've always done much with that. It's kind of out there. It's a promise but we don't treat it as something that's very likely to happen. I want you this morning to think about it as something that's going to happen. Another year has passed and we are that much closer. At some point Zion is going to be and the question will become who will be allowed to occupy Zion? That's another whole topic. For this morning I want to return to this story of the Brother of Jared. They went to this other land and they continued to travel. At some point it says they came to another sea. I'm assuming that this time when they came to the sea they came to the ocean, probably the Pacific Ocean, if the geography is as we think it was.

When they got there it says they came to a seashore. They dwelt in tents upon the seashore for the space of four years. It must have been fairly nice because they became a little complacent. They were happy being there. It was a good place. They were fine to just stay there. Why go to the effort to go anywhere else? After they had been there for the space of four years it says that the Lord came to the Brother of Jared again and He stood in a cloud and spoke to him. *And for the space of three hours did the Lord talk with the Brother of Jared, and chastened him because he remembered not to call upon the name of the Lord.* (Ether 1:39) I wonder if the Lord were to speak to us today would three hours do it? I think, at least I, am prone to become very complacent. It seems like it always works like this when you go through the scriptures. If you try a little the Lord blesses you a lot and it's easy to just say, 'Well thank you. This is great. I'll just stay here.' We forget that He didn't just do that for us. There is a purpose behind Him blessing us and it goes beyond us. That's pointed out in the scriptures if you read this story because it next says, *And the Brother of Jared repented of the evil which he had done, and did call upon the name of the Lord for his brethren who were with him.* (Ether 1:40) The Lord had chastised

the Brother of Jared and scolded him. Apparently one of the first things that he realized was that he had not been doing for his brethren what he should have been doing. I am sure there was a physical aspect to that too but at least a large part of what we have here in the story is the thing he had not been doing was praying for his brothers and sisters the way he should have been. He had not been upholding them spiritually to the Lord. He'd been happy to just stay right where he was. Maybe none of you have ever experienced that. I fear that I have. My bills get paid and I eat well so what do I care about everybody else? That's a problem. Particularly if we think we're going to be part of Zion because I don't think we are going to be able to be part of Zion unless we have really learned to love our fellowman as ourselves. We have to learn to use the Lord's blessings to accomplish the Lord's purpose for all mankind. Not just to make ourselves comfortable.

One of the things that the Lord told the Brother of Jared in this experience was he had to repent of his sins. We need to be doing that all the time. I hope you considered that this morning as you came here to participate in the Communion. The Lord told him that he needed to repent and not sin any more. Then He warned him and said, . . . *remember that my Spirit will not always strive with man.* . . . (Ether 1:41) We need to remember that. We can't just go along and say thank you, Lord, for this and thank you, Lord, for that and ignore the Lord's teachings and commandments.

After this conversation that God had with the Brother of Jared, do you know what He said to him next? This is what I hope you'll hear today. The Lord said, 'Go to work.' He told him to go to work, to get busy, start doing the things that he had showed him to do. In this case one of the things that He had shown him to do or told him to do was to build more barges so that they could travel this ocean that they had been camped out next to for the last four years. They were going to have to cross this ocean. I don't know what that would have been like to look out across the Pacific and think we're going to do what, in what, with what? The Lord told him to build barges and cross this sea.

One of the things that I think is interesting about this story in terms of where we're at today, if I had been the Brother of Jared I think I might have been saying, 'Wait a minute. You had us build barges to cross this other sea and we did that. Now we have to do it





again?’ Well, folks, we may have thought we were making progress. We may have thought we were working towards the kingdom but we’re not there. So the Lord is asking us again to ‘go to work!’ He’s not asking us to build a barge but to repent and to humble ourselves and to learn to obey His commandments. When He says go to work what do you think He has in mind? He is calling us, again, to do what He has always been asking us to do. For instance, He says you need to study the scriptures; YOU, individually. We need to study the scriptures so that we know what the Lord taught, what He said. It’s not really very safe for us most of the time to think, ‘Well, I don’t know. I don’t remember what that said or I’ve never read that. I’ll just go ask Rob.’ He probably knows so I don’t mean that he doesn’t. But we can’t rely on other people reading the scriptures for us, praying for us, paying our tithing for us. Those are things we have to do individually. (It’s good to have other people praying.) These things that the Lord has been after us for years to do always comes back to us individually. We have to do them. When He says ‘go to work’ He didn’t want us to spend all our time thinking about what we’ve already tried to do or what we thought we did and how it didn’t work out. He says ‘go to work’ and do this thing that I am asking you to do. If you will do this I will take you across this ocean to a promised land. Some days when I think about Zion and the possibility of Zion it seems so far away I realize that I don’t even know what it will really be like. It seems so far removed from Independence as it exists today. We



need to trust in the Lord, do the things the way He has told us to do them and trust that He’ll get us there.

There are a couple of things I wanted to be sure and touch on here that I think are applicable to us today. There were

two questions that the Brother of Jared asked the Lord. He said, ‘OK if I build these barges how will they have light in them? This trip is going to take a long time and we are going to need light? We can’t travel all that time without light. The other thing he said was, ‘How are we going to steer these barges?’ Apparently they hadn’t had to worry too much about that when they had crossed whatever other sea it was that they crossed earlier.

The interesting thing to me, and I don’t think I ever picked up on this before when I read this story, was there is nothing in the scriptures to indicate that the Lord ever even responded to the question about ‘How are we going to steer the barges?’ There’s nothing in the story to indicate that the Lord had him build some means to steer them. Maybe it just got left out of the story but to me it was interesting when I thought about it because we keep doing that. We keep saying, ‘Well, Lord, how are we going to do this? We have to know. We have to know how we’re going to get from here to there.’ I wonder if the Lord did not respond to him because He

was saying, ‘Don’t worry about that. That’s my job. I’ll get you where you need to go if you do your part.’ I think that would be part of His response to us today. If we would just do our part, if we would learn to love one another (He tells that is the absolute key), if we would obey the law of stewardship, if we would study these scriptures ourselves and pick them up and see what’s really in there, if we would pray to Him daily and constantly over every part of our lives; if we would do our part in being obedient (not trying to stand up and prove that somehow we are better than anybody else or that we have something that they can’t or don’t have). It’s not our job to prove anything other than the fact that the Lord’s word is true and it works by being obedient. That’s our job, to be obedient.

It troubles me this morning to stand up here and say these things because they have been said a thousand times before. I’m hoping this morning that the Spirit of God will somehow touch each heart here and let you know that if you will do your part, it’s not a difficult thing, but if you will do your part and will turn to Him and let Him have control of your life then He will, in fact, do His job through His Son Jesus Christ and that we will be His children whether in life or in death.

You know this story. The Lord said to the Brother of Jared, ‘OK you need light. How would you like me to do that?’ Today, at least for me, I’m constantly going to the Lord and saying I need light. I need to know what I’m supposed to be doing that will be helpful to my brothers and sisters. When the Brother of Jared asked that question God said, ‘What do you want done? What would work?’ You know that the Brother of Jared then went up into the mountain and he molded out of a larger rock 16 small stones. He took them back to the Lord and said, ‘Lord, if you would just touch these stones with your finger and decree that they give forth light, they will do that.’ The Lord did that. He reached out with His finger and touched each one of those stones and they gave light and they gave light all the way to the land of promise. If you go ahead and read the rest of the story you find out that they were brought to the Americas.

This morning I want you to consider that we as a people for a long time have talked about Zion and we’ve talked about how we can get there. Well, I wonder if our pastor were to go to the Lord and say, ‘Here we are in this little congregation, just a few of us. How are we ever going to accomplish anything significant for the kingdom? How are we ever going to be able to take the message of Jesus Christ to the whole world? If the Lord were to say to him, ‘Well, how would you like to do it?’ I can imagine our pastor looking around this congregation, or the remains of the Restoration peoples and saying, ‘Here’s 16 (or whatever number) people right here. Would you reach out and touch them, each one of them with your finger that your light would shine forth in them that the rest of the group, whether it be the community that they live in, their families, where they work, wherever they are; would you reach out and touch Bob and Rob, Sandy, Anna, etc. Would you reach out and touch each one of them that your light would shine forth in them in such a way that they could help build this kingdom and bring us across this ocean, not physically, but this vast expanse that seems to have stood between us and the kingdom of God for so long. Would you use these my, brothers and sisters? Would you touch them that



your light would shine forth in them and through that means we might all of us be brought to this land of promise or in our case to Zion?’

I might be stretching that story a little bit to say it that way but that’s my prayer this morning as we’ve come here and we’ve reaffirmed with the Lord our willingness to take upon us His name. As we’ve done that I hope we’ve done that sincerely so that when we are presented to the Lord, He will, in fact, be willing to claim us and to touch each one of us with His finger that we might be instruments in His hands for bringing light to the world around us.

There’s another scripture that I wanted to read in closing. It comes from 3rd Nephi 11:19, 20, 23. *Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared (when it says feared I think it means feared, respected and love the Lord) the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. But unto you that fear my name, shall the Son of righteousness arise with healing in his wings. . .*

It’s my prayer this morning that we will be a part of those who love the Lord, who speak often with one another about that, whose names will be written in this book the Lord has ordered to be written to keep the names of His people in and that our names might not be erased from that book. He’s paid an amazing price for us to have the opportunity to have our names in that book that we would be, in fact, a part of His jewels when He comes and returns to the earth, that He might spare us, that He might spare our brothers and sisters to whom He sends us and that we might have that experience of seeing the Son of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings. Can you imagine? I hope you don’t have to imagine. I hope it is, in fact, a part of your life’s experiences.



Praise the Lord all ye Lamoni-ians!
 For He has blessed us so abundantly
 We sing, we pray, we exalt Him forever.
 In our homes, Sanctuaries, in all places,
 His goodness endures and we will always remember
 To thank Him for all the People and wonderful faces

QUESTIONS WE EACH NEED TO ANSWER

Elder Eric Woolery

Keosauqua, Iowa

January 14, 2018

As a Call to Worship, High Priest Joel Loving used the scripture from Jacob 3:3-5. *Now in this thing we do rejoice; and we labor diligently to engraven these words upon plates, hoping that our beloved brethren, and our children, will receive them with thankful hearts, and look upon them, that they may learn with joy, and not with sorrow, neither with contempt concerning their first parents: For, for this intent have we written these things, that they may know that we knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory, many hundred years before his coming, and not only we, ourselves, had a hope of his glory, but also all the holy prophets which were before us. Behold, they believed in Christ, and worshipped the Father in his name; and also, we worship the Father in his name.*

This morning I would like to read from the 9th chapter of Genesis beginning with verse 18. *And God made a covenant with Noah, and said, This shall be the token of the covenant I make between me and you, and for every living creature with you, for perpetual generations; I will set my bow in the cloud; and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember my covenant, which I have made between me and you, for every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant, which I made unto thy father Enoch; that, when men should keep all my commandments, Zion should again come on the earth, the city of Enoch which I have caught up unto myself. And this is mine everlasting covenant, that when thy posterity shall embrace the truth, and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy; And the general assembly of the church of the firstborn shall come down out of heaven, and possess the earth, and shall have place until the end come. And this is mine everlasting covenant, which I made with thy father Enoch. (18-23)*

It was very hard for me to be silent this morning during Sunday school. There were a lot of things that were talked about in class and pre-worship that I’m going to touch on today. I just felt like the Lord was laying the groundwork. I hope that I can be sensitive enough to His Spirit to be able to bring what I feel He has prepared for me to bring.



As I have been studying and praying about what it is that I should bring this day Genesis 9, the scripture that I read to you, is probably the first scripture that came to mind. Joel leaned over and whispered to me that was one of his favorite scriptures. It's one of my favorite scriptures too because it's filled with promise. It's filled with promise.

As I was praying about what I was to bring there were four questions that came to my mind, and I want to ask you those questions this morning. Before I do that I want to ask you another question and my wife knows me well enough to know that this is who I am. I ask questions. That's how I get to know who somebody is because I want to know what they believe, what they think, where they've come from. I want to know about them.

Why are we here this morning? Are we here out of habit? Are we here because we enjoy one another's company? Are we here to worship God? What really is the purpose for us being here this morning? What do we hope to gain from being here together? Another question I want to ask you is, in your heart and in your soul do you have a desire that is above all other desires? Are you satisfied with where you are in your relationship with God? Do you believe or trust in the promises of God? Finally, who is your God?

When I read Genesis 9 to you I read to you one of the desires of my heart. I want to live to see that scripture become a reality. I want to live to see the city of Enoch return to the earth. The Lord said it is going to happen and if He said it's going to happen, it will. But it's not going to happen in my time or in your time. It's going to happen in His time. One of the keys to that is also that we play a big part in how soon that does happen. How do we prepare for that to happen?

I asked are you satisfied with where you are in your relationship with your God? I am not satisfied. It seems the older that I get the more I recognize that there are things in my life that I don't like because the Lord doesn't like them. I'm at the point in my life where it, I don't really want to say struggle, but it takes a greater amount of determination to leave those things behind or to remove them from my life because some of them have been ingrained in me for many, many years. I don't mind telling you how old I am. I'm 66 years old and like Joel, I'm sure all of you know, I've had my brush with death on more than one occasion. Most recently last March I had a stroke while I was in Africa. One of two things should have happened in that experience. I either should have been dead or I should have been paralyzed because I had a blood clot in my brain stem. When the doctor came in in the morning after I had had the stroke and they had done the MRI, the first words that he said when he came into my room were, 'God has healed you perfectly! You are a miracle.' I don't think I understood what exactly was going on during the time that I was experiencing my symptoms other than I knew that something was happening.

God in His mercy and His love saw fit to completely heal me at least to the extent that I could walk and talk and do the things that I need to do to live my life. Now I have difficulty sometimes in writing and my thought processes sometimes aren't quite as quick as they use to be. I don't have the strength and stamina that I once did, but the important thing is that if you have a work to do for the Lord, He will preserve you and He will take care of you as long as

you remain steadfast and true. That's my testimony this morning. I believe with all of my heart that as long as I remain steadfast and true and seek to serve Him wherever I can that He will preserve my life. He will continue to be with me and to help me to live but if the day ever comes that I get comfortable sitting in my chair at home, watching that thing that distracts us from Him, (called the TV) I don't know how long He will continue to abide with me.



I had an experience in Africa also that led up to my stroke. This happened in September the year before in 2016 when Rita and I were in Africa. Now I had been to Africa before. I had been in Tanzania before. When Rita and I were there we went to Tanzania for two weeks and then we came back to Kenya for two weeks. I knew Tanzania to be challenging. It's a lot like backpacking in the desert. Toward the end of our time in Tanzania I was having a real struggle with the environment. I was debating within myself whether or not I ever wanted to go back to Africa because I have to admit I have struggled every time I have been there. Yet the Lord, at different times it seems like, has opened the windows of heaven and has poured out a blessing to where He opened my mouth and gave me words to speak and I was able to bring the ministry that I really wanted to bring. As I was struggling within myself and having a debate of whether or not I would ever go back to Africa, I finally said in my mind, 'I'm never coming back.' That thought or that statement no sooner left my mind than the Spirit of the Lord spoke to me and He said, 'This is called sacrifice.'

Another question to you today is how much are you willing to sacrifice for your Lord? Do you have any understanding of the sacrifice that our Lord made for you and for me? One of the things that I do in my study time is I like to take accounts that are in the scriptures that are in more than one book of the New Testament such as the temptation of Jesus. That's contained in the book of Matthew and in the book of Luke. If you compare the two they are pretty much the same only they say things just a little bit different and there are things in one that are not in the other. So I like to take the two and combine them together to where I feel like I have a complete account from both writer's perspectives. I've done that with the temptation of Jesus. I've also done that with the Lord's



interaction with the rich young ruler. I would be willing to share these things with you. They are not mine to keep for just myself. I also did it with Jesus' experience in the Garden of Gethsemane. I'd like to read that combined account to you right now.

Then cometh Jesus and went as he was accustomed to the Mount of Olives unto a place called Gethsemane which was a garden and his disciples followed him. The disciples began to be sore amazed and to be very heavy and to complain in their hearts wondering if this be the Messiah. Jesus knowing their hearts said unto them, sit ye here while I go yonder and pray. He took with him Peter, James and John and rebuked them and said unto them my soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death. Tarry ye here, watch with me and pray that ye enter not into temptation. He withdrew from them about a stone's cast and kneeled down and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass from him saying, 'Abba, Father all things are possible unto thee. If it be possible and thou be willing let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless not my will but thine be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening him and he cometh unto the disciples and findeth them asleep and saith unto Peter, 'What? Could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak.' He went away again the second time and prayed and spake the same words saying, 'Oh my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me



except I drink it thy will be done.' Being in agony he prayed more earnestly and he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. When he rose up from prayer he came and found them asleep again for their eyes were heavy neither knew they what to answer him. And he left them and went away again and prayed the third time saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples and saith unto them, 'Sleep on now and take rest. Behold the hour is at hand when the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.'

I believe with all my being that Jesus is the Son of God and yet I believe in this account in the garden He showed His humanity. He showed that He was indeed a man and He came to this earth to live and to experience the same things that we experience. In fact, the Book of Mormon in several places talks about how He will experience pain and He will experience thirst and hunger and He

will experience temptation. The reason that He did all of these things is that He might know how to succor us. We sang that in one of the hymns. I don't know if I can give a real good definition of the word succor but it means to nurture or to take care of or to minister to. He would know how to succor us. How can He go before our Heavenly Father and be our defender and be our advocate unless He knows firsthand what it is that we have experienced. When we go through trials in our own lives, when we experience things and someone else experiences the same things, don't we have a better understanding of how to minister to them, how to succor them, how to help them through this time that they are going through?

One of the reasons that I wanted to take Rita to Africa with me was because the first time I went to Africa I realized how many widows there are. Brother and sisters, if we think we have it tough here in the United States we need to think again. The widows over there don't have the benefits of things that we do. I wanted Rita to be able to go and to share her testimony of how God had blessed her and been with her. I don't care whether you are in the United States or whether you're in Africa and wherever you are being a widow and losing a companion is a tough thing. It's hard. Rita was able to bring a good ministry while she was there.

One of the things that I really felt that I wanted to share this morning also is do we believe God, do we believe His promises, do we trust in His promises. Do you believe that Zion will be? That's a question that I'd like a response to. Do you believe that Zion will be? Why do you believe that? Is it just going to magically happen? No, it's not going to just magically happen. Do you want to be a part of Zion? How badly do you want to be a part of it?

In Section 83 of the Doctrine and Covenants it says, *And now I give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life; for you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God. For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ; and the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit; and everyone that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit, cometh unto God, even the Father. (7a-d)*

In Mormon chapter 4:92-94 it says, *O then despise not, and wonder not, but hearken unto the words of the Lord, and ask the Father in the name of Jesus for what things soever ye shall stand in need. (It says ask the Father in the name of Jesus. It always disturbs me a little bit when I hear a child say, 'Dear Jesus.' They are not being taught who they are to pray to. We are to pray to the Father in the name of Jesus for it is only through Jesus that we can come to the Father. If we are teaching our children or our grandchildren or whoever it may be to say, 'Dear Jesus' we are not teaching them correctly. I can show you a multitude of scriptures that will back up what I just shared with you. The scriptures are very plain that we pray to the Father in the name of Jesus.) Doubt not, but be believing, and begin as in times of old, and come unto the Lord with all your heart, and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling before him. Be wise in the days of your probation (we are in our days of probation); strip yourselves of all uncleanness; ask*



not, that ye may consume it on your lusts, but ask with a firmness unshaken, that ye will yield to no temptation, but that ye will serve the true and living God. I think that's my sermon all in that one scripture.

You know what happened here in this area back in the early 60's. I can remember as a young man, there is just that tickle in my memory, I heard about this Creston Experience. It hasn't been until the last few years that I really took a real interest in it and really began to study it out. I know that you have Sherman and Cheryl here who were a part of that experience but I want to share some of that experience with you again because I feel like it's important. We, as a church, I feel are just spinning our wheels because we have not really become committed to the cause of the kingdom. We have not decided that we are going to sacrifice the natural man to become the children of God, to become a son and a daughter of God.

I am not going to go into all of the Creston Experience but I want to just share some highlights. God promised a spiritual blessing and an outpouring of His Spirit if four things were done. Number 1: be obedient to prayer and fasting. Number 2: continue to be obedient to the financial law. Number 3: continue to be obedient to the Word of Wisdom and continue to be obedient to the commandments found in the scriptures. I am sure that we all know and understand what prayer and fasting are. Is there anybody that does not know what prayer and fasting is?

I want to share a quick experience I had when I was in Germany in 2015. I was with John Mundy and we went to visit a lady who John had worked with for about 10 years. In the first five years of that she was very resistant to anything to do with God because she was raised in a Communist country. She was living in East Germany and was what's been described as a hardcore Communist. She was very hard. This is what John shared with me. It took him 5 years before he was ever able to begin to finally crack that hardness, that shell that was around her. John and I had gone to visit Doris and we were having a conversation with her. Just before we were to leave she was sharing with us some things that were going on in her life and she didn't know quite what to do. I suggested to her that she pray and fast. She said, 'What's fasting?' So I shared with her just off the cuff what fasting was. I wasn't satisfied with that definition that I had given her. I knew that we were coming back to visit her in a few days so during that time I spent some time in the scriptures. I like to teach from the scriptures because this is the word of God.

When we went back I shared these scriptures and then I asked her if she understood what fasting is? She said, 'Yes.' I wasn't sure in my own mind that she understood and so I asked her again and she said, 'Yes I do.' Then she gave me the most simple, concise, clear definition of fasting that I have ever heard. I can't stand before you this morning and tell you what that definition was other than I went, 'Wow! She's got it.' If you don't know what fasting is study it out.

The second thing was to be obedient to the financial law. We talked in class this morning about filing tithing statements. Filing a tithing statement and being obedient and paying your tithing are two different things. You can file a tithing statement without ever

paying a cent in tithing. If we pay our tithing and if we are faithful to that, giving back to God what is rightfully His in the first place (Only 10% of what's rightfully His in the first place and that 10% is only on the increase of what we have.), then we open the doors for God to bring the blessings. In Malachi it says He'll open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing such as there is not room enough to hold. I have had Rita come to me time after time after time since we've been married saying, 'I don't know how this is going on. We've got more money going out then we've got coming in and yet everything is remaining the same.' I don't think that we waste our money but we try to be faithful in the paying of our tithing. You young people I had a list of qualities that I wanted in a companion. These four things that I read to you that needed to be done in order to claim the promises of God were all on that list of qualities that I wanted in a companion.

I want to get back to the Creston Experience for a minute. For prayer services the organ would be playing very quietly as people would enter and quietly go sit down and meditate to prepare for the service. I have been to many, many, many prayer services of the Saints where we live up to our name of Chatter Day Saints right up to the moment that the priesthood come in, sit down and stand up to begin the service. Why can't we come in and sit quietly and meditate and pray and prepare for the Spirit of the Lord to come and to be in our presence? We can't expect to just run in and say, 'OK, God, here I am. Let's go!' Elders were almost exclusively used for prayer services. The priesthood involved with the prayer service would meet early to pray for the service. The priesthood was actively involved in their office and calling and in doing home ministry. They learned the responsibilities of their priesthood office. That's something else that I really wonder about. We have men who are called into the priesthood and yet they're not taught their office and calling. They don't learn what it is that's expected of them. We carry a greater responsibility because we have allowed the hands to be laid upon our head and had that mantle of priesthood placed upon us. If we don't learn what our responsibilities are we will be held accountable for that.

There were no ites or cliques. Here again how many times do we come into a branch of the church and you have this little group over here and this little group over there and another group over here. We all kind of segregate out, either by family or by the way we think or whatever the case may be. That is something that we need to learn to overcome. I believe that if this happened in Creston it can happen anywhere in any branch of the church where people are willing to keep the word of the Lord.

Another thing that happened was John the Beloved visited among them for 6 months unknown to the people. John shared these things with the branch. *Many of you have not followed the commandments as the Father would have you to do but because of prayer and fasting and obedience to the financial law and the Word of Wisdom on the part of many of you present here tonight the Heavenly Father has granted me permission to speak to you before I take leave. I have seen you in your homes as you have gathered your children around. This is the plan that the Father has. I have been in your places of business and in your classrooms at school. I have been in your kitchens and whispered in your ears. During my*



visits in your homes I observed many things that were displeasing. Many of my brothers and sisters were wasting time in front of their television sets, many of my ministry who needed so badly to study the scriptures because of their lack of understanding. I sorrowed when I saw how some of them disobeyed the Word of Wisdom. I tried to enter some of the homes and they closed the door and I could not enter. I heard many of your discussions and was disturbed because many of you could not forgive with your hearts your brothers and sisters. I have walked with you in the grocery stores and whispered in your ears as you were about to purchase something that was not necessary for you to sustain life. Many listened but many turned a deaf ear and listened to the whisperings of the evil one and purchased those things which were not a just



want. I have been in your places of business and seen you about to do those things which were not right in the sight of God and whispered in your ear. Some of you listened and some did not. This congregation of Creston has been blessed above that of any other congregation in the world, in the world. If you will continue in fasting and prayer, continue in obedience to the financial law and the Word of Wisdom, the Father will send another comforter for He desires to continue to bless you.

In reading this experience of the testimony of Creston it was said that about 75% of the congregation saw that something was happening and were a part of it. There was about 25% that were not. I thought as I read this testimony I couldn't understand why they couldn't see it because I could feel the Spirit testifying to me that this indeed was something that happened. This was a true experience. I couldn't understand why someone could be there and not feel the presence of the Lord. Then a few years ago I came across someone who when I was sharing things about the Creston Experience came up to me after the service and said, 'That never happened.' You could have knocked me over with a feather! I wasn't there but I do know some that were and I believe their testimony because I believe the testimony that has been written about that experience.

I've heard it said, 'The Word of Wisdom is not a commandment.' So what about the scriptures, and there's more than one that says, 'For you shall live by every word that proceedeth

forth from the mount of God.' Do we discount that? Let's read a little bit about Section 86. It was described as "A word of wisdom for the benefit of the council of high priests, assembled in Kirtland, and the church; and also, the Saints in Zion. To be sent greeting, not by commandment, or constraint, but by revelation and the word of wisdom; showing forth the order and will of God in the temporal salvation of all Saints in the last days. Given for a principle, with promise; adapted to the capacity of the weak, and the weakest of all Saints, who are or can be called Saints. No, it's not a commandment but it is a word of wisdom. If I was to tell you there's a tornado across the street here and you'd better take shelter right now. Are you going to say, 'Nah, it's not a commandment.' That may be a poor example but I hope you get the idea of what I'm trying to share with you.

Verse one of Section 86:1a says, *Behold, verily thus saith the Lord unto you, In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation.* Why would the Lord waste His breath telling us something if it wasn't important? Going on verse 3c-d which is at the end of Section 86 says, *And all Saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel, and marrow to their bones, and shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures; and shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint; and I, the Lord, give unto them a promise that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them. Amen.*

Brother and sisters, do you feel like I am being a little hard on you? I am sorry but you know I count myself in this too. I went to the doctor the other day and had some bloodwork done. I felt like I was doing a pretty good job of trying to live by the Word of Wisdom. My A1C came back and it was higher than it had been so Rita and I decided that we're not living as close to that as we should. The Lord wants us to be healthy and there are a lot of things in our foods today that are not good for us.

Something else that was not in this experience at Creston but we are told in other things that the Lord has brought to us through revelations is to keep the Sabbath Day holy. When I've talked about this in times past I have had people say, 'Oh that was just for the Old Testament.' If that was just for the Old Testament then I guess murder, adultery, lying, coveting, disrespecting parents, stealing, profanity and having idols are all OK. I would suggest if you are taking notes go to Isaiah 58:13-14 and read what it says there. Also Doctrine and Covenants 59:2e-g. Then tell me if that was just for the Old Testament.

You know the Lord is calling. He's calling us to make what we would consider sacrifices and yet they are not. We need to do what the Lord is calling us to do. That is to seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion, there needs to be an ensign to the nations. There needs to be a people who are willing to step forward and be the Lord's people and to identify the sins in their lives and say, 'The time has come that enough is enough. I want to be a son or a daughter of the Most High God.'



I have a couple of things I want to finish with. Brother Neil Simmons brought something in August of 2016 that had some very good points that I have given a lot of consideration too because I recognize truth in them. I want to take those truths and apply them to my life. I asked you why are you here this morning? I hope that every Sunday that you come to church and you share something that you recognize to be truth that you take it into yourself and you make it a part of your life. When we come to church it has to be a life-changing experience. We can't just come and be satisfied to sit here and look at each other and say, 'Oh we all look very nice this morning. It's so nice to be with all of you.' How does coming together change our lives?

There were nine bullet points in what Brother Neil brought:

1. We do not love God as we should.
2. We lack unity among us.
3. We worship idols. (In other words internet, cell phone or TV.) These are all things that distract us from God. (It does not allow God to be the center, focal point of our lives.)
4. We have failed to teach our children the words and ways of Christ.
5. We are not learning to study the scriptures ourselves. We depend on others to teach us. (How do we know that what we are being taught by someone else is truth? We have to study ourselves and to take this to where it is a part of us.)
6. We are being just hearers of the word and not doers.
7. We are not making God the Lord of our lives.
8. We are not obedient to the law of stewardship. (The law of stewardship. Not the financial law but the law of stewardship. That's our time, our talents, our money and our thoughts. What do we think about? That is a stewardship.)
9. We are full of pride. (I don't care who you are myself included we have pride.)

Perhaps all of you have heard about the clouds over Zion. This was given through Ray Hugget who was the Denver Stake President in 1971. I am going to read what he shared with you and see if there is any similarities to what Brother Hugget brought in 1971 and what Brother Simmons brought in 2016.

We do not live or teach our children the ways of the Kingdom of God. Those are: 1) to keep the law of stewardship; 2) to have sanctity in marriage and in our homes; 3) to keep the Sabbath Day holy. (That could be another whole sermon but if there is something that we do on Sunday that does not bring Him glory we need to eliminate that.) Another bullet point of Brother Hugget's was: 4) we do not study the scriptures. (Are you seeing any similarities? Is the Lord still warning us saying, 'Hey these are things that still are not right in your lives.?') Lastly, we do not keep the Word of Wisdom.

I read a testimony by a woman who had attended the Kirtland Reunion in the latest magazine that comes out from the Conference of Restoration Elders. This was part of her testimony. She said, 'All week with each service we were impressed from God to make changes in our lives, to repent, fast and pray, to become grounded in God's word and to follow His commandments.' Brothers and sisters, we need to examine where we are in our lives and in our

relationship with our Heavenly Father. There are changes that each of us need to make.

Zion will be and it's up to us whether we will be a part of that or not. What is the deepest desire of your heart? Do you want to be with people who are with the Lord, with Christ or do you want to continue in the world?

There are times that I speak that I feel like there is more. I'm at one of those points now but I'm not quite sure what it is so I'm going to end with this. These are the scriptures that deal with the temptation of Jesus. Add this to all the other things that you have to think about this morning. I appreciate your Newsletter that comes out with all the sermons. You have had some really good sermons here lately. I read the one from the Newsletter that just came out. There was some good stuff in there. That's part of the reason why I asked you the question. When you come to church do you just come to sit and listen or do you look to take something away from here that will help you to be a better person. I mean really apply what we hear.

This is the temptation of Jesus taken from Matthew 4 and Luke 4.

And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be with God and in those days he did eat nothing for forty days and forty nights and had communed with God and he afterwards hungered and was left to be tempted of the devil. When the devil came to him he said, 'If thou be the Son of God command that these stones be made bread,' but Jesus answered him and said, 'It is written man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' Then Jesus was taken up into the holy city and the Spirit setteth him on the pinnacle in the temple. Then the devil came unto him and said, 'If thou be the Son of God cast thyself down from hence for it is written, 'He shall give his angels charge concerning thee and in their hands they shall bear thee up to keep thee lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus answering said unto him, 'It is written again, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' And again Jesus being in the spirit was taken up into a high mountain and he beheld all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them in a moment of time. And the devil came unto him again and said, 'All this power will I give unto thee and the glory of them for they are delivered unto me and to whomsoever I will I give them. If thou therefore will fall down and worship me all shall be thine.' Then Jesus answered and said unto him, 'Get thee behind me satan for it is written thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve.' When the devil had ended all the temptations he departed from him for a season. And Jesus returned in the power of the spirit into Galilee.





Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in a gathering of God’s people. In order for us to claim we are gathering as His people we will first have to gather in obedience to His word. We will need to gather humbly and penitently, acknowledging our complete dependence on God, on His Son Jesus Christ, and on the power of His Spirit. We will have to gather without disputation or contention – in the spirit of charity.

The Lord has made it very clear that we cannot claim to be *His people* unless we truly love one another (John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:9-11; and 1 John 4:7-8, 20-21). This invitation, therefore, comes to all who truly love God and thereby love their brothers and sisters; to those that stand ready to defer to the direction of the Spirit.

I want to affirm my understanding that there are only two churches in this world:

1) the church of the Lamb of God, and 2) the church of the devil (1 Nephi 3:220-237). Regardless of the many names we have attached to our various organizations, we ultimately belong to one of these two churches. It is important to love one another and to put an end to all of the things (and doctrines) that we have allowed to separate us. The doctrine that is important is summarized in II Nephi 13:7-32; Alma 16:130-138; III Nephi 5:29-42; and III Nephi 8:32-57. There are others too, but it always comes back to loving God and loving each other. Obeying God and upholding one another in prayer, with a willingness to have all things in common (physical and spiritual), is key and can happen only where there is an absence of pride.

The invitation to attend and participate in this conference is not an attempt to proselytize for the JCRB. The JCRB is simply an organization, amongst several, which desires to help in bringing people to a knowledge of Christ and His Father, the great Jehovah (Moroni 10:31); to assist them in remaining faithful to their covenant with God. Hopefully those who participate in the activities of the JCRB, like this conference, will be found to be a part of the Church of Jesus Christ when they stand before the judgment bar of God. However, the JCRB is not in and of itself that Church. It is simply an organization which hopes to support the work of said Church and encourage those who commit themselves to that work as God’s children.

As I have penned this invitation I have felt it important to also share with you my view of my own role in the JCRB. I was asked by the spring, 2017 Conference body to act as President of the JCRB. I felt prompted by what I believed to be the Lord’s Spirit to say “yes,” and I agreed to do so. In thinking about this role I have become convinced, and want you to consider, that I am not the president of the church in this role. God is the head of His Church. He needs no man to take His position. I am only the presider over the planning for the upcoming conference – nothing more. For this conference to be of any worth to God’s people it has to be presided over by God’s Spirit for His purposes. His purposes are not restricted to one organization or “ite.” His invitation and His



promises are extended to all who love Him, take upon them His name, obey His commandments, and remain faithful to Him all the days of their lives. Hopefully, by His power and direction, this conference will help and strengthen those who attend to become and/or remain His people—His Church—as He has defined that in the scriptures cited above.

If you have a desire to be a part of His people, if you feel a need to be encouraged and strengthened in your efforts for the kingdom, please come and participate in His conference. Come fasting, humble, repentant, prayerful, having prepared yourself to be open to His Spirit. This conference will be judged by the fruits it bears in your lives, not by those who sponsored it. May God give you wisdom and direction in knowing how you should respond to this invitation.

Your brother in Christ,
Sherman W. Phipps,
General Conference President (2017-2018)



LYNDA SUZANNE (PROPST) ROLFE

April 29, 1946 - January 13, 2018

Lamoni, Iowa

Lynda Suzanne Propst Rolfe, of Lamoni, Iowa, passed away at the age of 71, Saturday January 13th, 2018 at 5:30pm. Lynda was released from a two year battle with cancer and died peacefully surrounded by family, even singing the night before.

Lynda was born in Orofino, Idaho and she was many things to many people; Beloved Mother, Wife, Grandma, Sister, Aunt, Cousin, Neighbor, Artist, Vocalist, Gardener, Cook, and so many more...

To us all she was a Teacher, and a Friend.

Her legacy of creativity and kindness will live on in us All, as one of her many gifts was her ability to encourage us To Try, to be better today than we were yesterday, to strive to be our best. She was a natural teacher and everyone felt like she could be their mom. She spent much of her life teaching; every subject and every grade. So many lives were changed by her touch. She was silly, creative, a fiery red head, brave, strong, tough, kind and loving. She saw art in everything and was a very talented painter and potter. Born in the mountains, she also felt at home by the sea, traveling the world to places like Scotland, Italy, Mexico, England, Guatemala, and coast to coast across the USA. She loved to sing and always encouraged us to follow our passions. Her strong faith in God taught us to have hope and strength in our convictions.

We will follow our passions like you did Lynda.

We will remember what you taught us and will make you proud.

“When I die, Hallelujah by and by... I’ll fly away!”

Services were held at Lamoni Community of Christ on 531 W. Main, on Saturday January 20th, at 4:00pm.

Special thanks to all the amazing care givers in hospitals and clinics from Iowa to Missouri. Specifically the Oncology Staff at the Bloch Center and KU Med. Your dedication to serving others and giving while they were in pain, has touched and blessed our families. Words hardly relay our gratitude for your service.

In Loving Memory





Church of Jesus Christ Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

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



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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)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb. 1, 8, 15, 22

Book of Mormon Night. Every Thursday evening at Joe & Anna Mickelson's in Lamoni at 6:45 PM

Feb. 2-4 Congregational Fasting Weekend Prayer and Fasting Weekend for the "souls that know not God." Fasting Friday at 6:00PM through Sunday 12:00 PM - Potluck following Sunday Sacrament service.

Feb. 10 Men's Breakfast at Pizza Hut 11:00 AM

Mar. 2 "Ladies Night Out" (Further Details to Come)

Mar 26-30 Breakfast with the Master - Mount Ayr

Apr 2-7 JCRB General Conference - Independence

Apr 27-28 Book of Mormon Symposium - Independence

