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"A Marvelous Work and a Wonder"

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"A Marvelous Work and a Wonder"

By President Heber J. Grant

We celebrate the hundredth anniversary of a marvelous occurrence fraught with wondrous results, not only to those who lived in the day in which it took place, but to men and women of today; and its influence will continue to be felt for good in all the years that are to come.

The appearance of God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ to the boy prophet Joseph Smith is the greatest event that has taken place in all the world since the birth of our Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. It was the most wonderful vision ever bestowed upon mortal man; for, while Jesus the Son had walked and talked with men both before and after his resurrection, I know of no record in which we are informed that both ever appeared together in a visit to the earth, as in this marvelous vision to Joseph Smith.

The event marks the beginning of "a marvelous work and a wonder," which was foretold by Isaiah the Prophet (29:13, 14) confirmed by Daniel (2:29-44), and further predicted by John the Revelator (14:6, 7). The personal visitation of the Father and the Son, choosing Joseph to be the leader of the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times, marked the beginning of this work, and this was supplemented by the visitation of angels and other holy messengers, conferring upon Joseph the powers of the Priesthood, the authority to act in the name of God—to introduce the gospel of Jesus Christ by divine authority to mankind, and by divine direction to organize and establish the true Church of Christ in the latter days.

The vision was a reality and direct. When Joseph received it, men were loth to believe that it was possible for God or holy beings to speak to man on the earth. But after he had declared his message there followed, even up to this day, false "spiritist" communications, in many directions all over the land. This was doubtless the design of Satan, done to deceive the people. But note the difference between the right and the genuine, the wrong and the spurious. As far as I am aware, there has not been a single case of direct revelation or visitation from the spirit world, except through the authority of the Priesthood restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Alleged communications have been received without number, but almost invariably, these have been made through mediums, or mechanical devices, and as invariably have resulted in little or no particular good or purpose. Joseph Smith received his divine message direct from the messengers sent of God, and was not dependent upon a medium of any kind, either through person or by mechanism; there was nothing that stood between him and the messenger

who was sent of God to deliver, personally, the divine message which he had been intrusted to deliver to the Prophet, for the purpose of establishing the great work of the Lord and to further His purposes in the earth. Furthermore, each message delivered resulted in good to the human race. Joseph required no medium, but personally heard from the divine messengers, the glorious tidings that God desired to intrust to him, and which were necessary for the founding and building of God's "marvelous work and a wonder" in the latter days.

The greatest evidences of the divinity of the First Vision, as well as of the visitations of angels and other messengers to Joseph, the Prophet, that followed the First Vision, are the practical results that have come from the messages that were delivered and the authority that was conferred. The gospel in its purity, has been restored to the earth. The wonderful record of the ancient people of this continent, the Book of Mormon, was brought forth from its hiding place in the Hill Cumorah, containing a fulness of the gospel as taught by the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, upon this continent of America. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized on the 6th of April, 1830, in the town of Fayette, Seneca County, N. Y., and has prospered in temporal and spiritual, in moral and economic affairs, from the day of its organization, regardless of the persecution and obstacles that it has persistently encountered and overcome in its career of practically one hundred years. This Church is built upon the rock of revelation, through which means the constituted authorities thereof receive authority from God direct, to act in their callings and to enjoy the gifts and powers of the gospel. The mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is one of peace. It aims to prepare the people of the world for the second coming of Christ, and for the inauguration of that blessed day when the Millennium shall come and Christ shall reign as the King of kings, standing at the head of the universal brotherhood of man.

One writer has referred in a short review to some of the accomplishments of the Latter-day Saints, in the following words:

"From forty members, in 1830, the following of the Church today has grown to hundreds of thousands. In the beginning it had the Prophet Joseph alone to declare its doctrines, now it has missionaries in all liberal nations of the earth. It has prospered through the fire of severest persecution. Driven, peeled and scattered, their prophet and patriarch basely murdered for their testimonies, its members have rallied with each onslaught and pressed on with the work with greater force and power than before. It counts its martyrs by the score, its heroes and heroines by the thousands. Driven from their homes in Illinois, they were marvelously sustained by God in their wonderful exodus to the Rocky Mountains. In this wilderness of the West the rich blessings of the Lord have followed them in the establishment of one of the most prosperous, thrifty and happy commonwealths of our nation. To it have been gathered tens of thousands of the poor from the na-

tions of the earth to build up and beautify the latter-day Zion, virtually fulfilling the prediction: 'And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the House of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.' And this one: 'The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.'

"Temples, schools, houses of worship, cities and villages have sprung up in the thirsty wilderness, and the result of the faith, the thrift and the labor of this peculiar people may be seen in their beautiful homes, gardens, fields, herds, and possessions, in the whole region of the great West: while the religious truths promulgated by them, without money or pay, are taking root, yea bearing fruit, not alone in their own midst but even among the heathen and, in every Christian land. Having discarded dead forms, the members of this Church worship from the heart, and point to a living faith, fully sustained by noble works. Their Church organization is unsurpassed, their government unequaled in modern annals. They build temples for the worship of God and for the performance of ordinances for the living and the dead, and the path of their persecutions, as well as the land which they now peacefully inhabit, is dotted by these holy structures. Everything about them points to the peculiar people that were to be established in the latter days—their whole career is a 'marvelous work and a wonder.'"—Anderson's *Brief History of the Church*.

This summary, which might be added to indefinitely, by facts and figures, can be demonstrated to be true by anyone who is willing to pay a visit to the cities and settlements of the Latter-day Saints, stretching from Canada on the north to Mexico on the south, in all the intermountain country of our great and glorious land, the United States, with thriving colonies in many foreign lands, and upon the islands of the sea. And it is not out of place to predict that the people of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will continue to thrive and prosper, spiritually and temporally, as long as they keep the commandments of God and walk in the way which he shall point out through his inspired servants holding the holy Priesthood. They are a people whose faith, teachings, thrift, and temporal and spiritual progress will be a blessing and an advantage to the whole nation. A people whom none need to fear, but on the contrary, bless and welcome, because they seek to do the will of the Lord, to treat all people in conformity with the principles of justice and righteousness, themselves loyal and law-abiding, obedient to the rules and regulations of the just governments of the earth, and the vitalizing gospel of Jesus Christ, established and restored through the instrumentality of Joseph Smith by visitation of God and his Son, Jesus the Christ who stands at the head of the great and marvelous work in which we are engaged. Their motto is "Truth and Liberty," and they would extend these to all mankind, and make all mankind partakers of the influence of peace and righteousness which accompany the true gospel of Jesus Christ—the only means by which peace and the brotherhood of man may be established in all the world.