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The Church in Mexico

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Abstract: This article testifies that the Book of Mormon is the promised sign that the work of the Lord has begun among all nations. “We may draw a lesson from the history of the Mexican people and their progenitors,” as it is outlined in the Book of Mormon.



the Church in MEXICO

Marion G. Romney
of the Council of the Twelve

My beloved brethren and sisters: I loved and respected our leaders who have gone to their rewards since last conference. To Sisters Bennion, McKay, and Kirkham I pay my respects and pray the Lord to comfort, sustain, and bless them and their families.

I have been touched by the testimonies of these men who have this day been called into service as General Authorities. I feel certain that the Lord inspired President McKay to name them. From my acquaintance with them and my knowledge of their work, I can testify that all of them are faithful and devoted servants of God.

I want to say just a word about Brother Joseph T. Bentley who has this day been called to preside over the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association. I joined wholeheartedly in the vote of appreciation to the brethren who are being released. I know they have rendered long and able service, and I feel sure that Brother Bentley will prove to be a worthy successor to them. I have known him from the time he was born. I knew his father, Joseph C. Bentley. He was my bishop from the time I was born until we left Mexico. I remember how when my mother was in need, my father being away from home, he let me chop wood from some old stumps in the tithing office yard. I can still remember the blisters. He was a very wise man. He did not permit us to suffer for the necessities of life, but he saw to it that we worked for what we got.

Today I desire to do three things; first, make a short report on the Mexican missions I have just visited; second, draw a lesson from the history of the Mexican people and their progenitors; and, third, make an application of that lesson to the people of our day.

I have taken as my text the words of Nephi:

Wherefore, I write unto my people, unto all those that shall receive hereafter these things which I write, that they may know the judgments of God, that they come upon

all nations, according to the word which he hath spoken. (2 Nephi 25:3.)

In the main the missionaries in Mexico are in good health, working hard, and therefore enjoying the spirit of their callings. We visited with and heard the reports and testimonies of 254 of them.

Many of the people among whom they labor are receptive to the gospel. Last year there were 1,288 convert baptisms. As of the first of the year the Church membership in Mexico was 11,249.

The missionaries tell of many faith-promoting experiences. To me, however, the greatest is the transformation taking place in the feelings, thinking, and interests of the missionaries themselves. Their adjustment to the environment and the language, together with the love they develop for the humble people they serve, must be seen to be appreciated. It could not be accomplished but by the power of God. Imagine, if you will, an English-speaking twenty-year-old lad, becoming so absorbed in Spanish that after but three months he has difficulty bearing his testimony in English. Like all true missionaries, each regards his own field of labor as choice above all others.

My fellow countrymen, Harvey H. Taylor and Claudious Bowman, the mission presidents, are wise and able men. With their devoted wives they give faithful service.

In Mexico, itself, marked advancement has been made during the past forty years. Reforms forged in the Revolution have measurably advanced the democratic process. A comparatively stable government has arisen. Phenomenal progress has been made in education. Industry has expanded. Hard-surfaced roads and air lanes crisscross the country. The population is rapidly increasing. For many, living standards have improved.

It occurred to me that by these and other means the Lord is beginning to prepare the remnant of Lehi to receive their promised blessings.

Jesus said to their progenitors,

... ye are the children of the prophets; and ye are of the house of Israel; and ye are of the covenant which the Father made with ... Abraham.

And ... this people will I establish in this land, ... and it shall be a New Jerusalem. And the powers of heaven shall be in the midst of this people; yea, even I will be in the midst of you. (3 Nephi 20:25, 22.)

Looking into the faces of nearly 10,000 Church members and investigators, I thought of their promised blessings and contrasted their present status with that to which they must rise to attain them. I thought also of our divine commission to carry the gospel to them and was all but overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task. But then I remembered, too, the Lord's assurance that he will hasten his work in its time and was comforted with the knowledge that the acceptance of the gospel will greatly accelerate their

advancement. Personally, I am very grateful for the impetus being given by the First Presidency to the work among them.

Many other matters weighed upon my mind as throughout our extensive traveling we observed conditions among them. The effects of the Spanish conquest and of four centuries of domination by secular and ecclesiastical tyrants are everywhere painfully apparent. The ruins, with their mute evidence of so-called fertility cults and human sacrifice, eloquently testify to the degraded status to which they had fallen long before the Spanish conquest.

My heart was saddened as I contrasted their present circumstances with the blessed conditions which prevailed among their progenitors following the post-resurrection ministry of Jesus. At that time, as you will remember, they developed a society superior to any since Eden, save that of Enoch only; a society in which, "there was no contention . . . because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people"; a society in which, "there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness;" a society in which every member had conquered the lusts of the flesh. ". . . and surely," concludes the record, "there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God." (4 Nephi 15-16.)

". . . my joy is great, even unto fulness, because of you, . . ." Jesus said to them, "yea, and even the Father rejoiceth, and also all the holy angels, . . ." (3 Nephi 27:30.) As I contemplated this golden era, I remembered also that even as Jesus spoke his joy was turned to sorrow and he said, as he pre-visionsed the apostasy into which their posterity would fall:

But behold, it sorroweth me because of the fourth generation from this generation, . . . for they will sell me for silver and for gold, and for that which moth doth corrupt and which thieves can break through and steal. And in that day will I visit them, even in turning their works upon their own heads. (*Ibid.*, 27:32.)

They who spurned the light of his gospel and began the descent into the awful darkness through which the remnant has since passed not only had this warning before them, they also had the warning of Nephi given some six hundred years earlier. He foretold their apostasy, concluding with this doleful note:

... And I looked, and beheld three generations pass away in righteousness; and their garments were white even like unto the Lamb of God. . . .

And I . . . saw many of the fourth generation who passed away in righteousness.

And . . . I looked and beheld the people of my seed gathered together in multitudes against the seed of my brethren; and they were gathered together to battle.

And . . . I beheld . . . that the seed of my brethren did overpower the people of my seed.

. . . and I saw wars and rumors of wars among them; and in wars and rumors of wars I saw many generations pass away.

And . . . after they had dwindled in unbelief they became a dark, and loathsome, and a filthy people, full of idleness and all manner of abominations. (1 Nephi 12:11-12, 15, 19, 21, 23.)

Notwithstanding these warnings, they wilfully took the downward course. The judgments of God which have since been visited upon them have been but the inevitable fruits of their rebellion. These judgments came, however, as Nephi said they would, according to the word which the Lord had spoken.

But, the time for them to prepare to receive their blessings is now at hand. Of this we are assured, because Jesus said that when the Book of Mormon should be brought to them, ". . . it shall be a sign unto them, that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of" his promises. (3 Nephi 21:7.)

Great is the message of the Book of Mormon to the remnant of Lehi. From it they may learn of their origin, that they are heirs of the covenant. It reveals to them and teaches them of Jesus Christ and his gospel. If they will study, learn, and accept it for what it in truth is, they will come to know and understand their past, they will obtain a vision of and a hope in their future, and they will realize as did their progenitors that only through accepting and obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ can they obtain their promised blessings.

But I would not leave you with the impression that the message of the Book of Mormon is for the remnant only. It has peculiar application to us of the United States. The message expressed by Nephi and confirmed by the epic of the Book of Mormon peoples is universal,

. . . the judgments of God [have always and will continue to] . . . come upon all nations [regardless of time or place], according to the word which he hath spoken. (2 Nephi 25:3.)

This law embraces two divinely revealed constants. Amos put one of them in these words,

Surely the Lord will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. (Amos 3:7.)

Jesus thus stated the other:

Although, the days will come, that heaven and earth shall pass away; yet my words shall not pass away, but all shall be fulfilled. (Joseph Smith 1:35.)

Understanding and applying these truths, men and nations may determine for themselves the cycle of their own

lives, whether it shall terminate in the shadow or in the light.

History amply testifies to this conclusion. Through Noah the Lord warned the antediluvians of their impending destruction. With the warning, he presented the means of escape—the gospel of Jesus Christ. His hearers spurned the warning; rejected the gospel; the floods came.

The Lord sent many prophets to the Jaredites, who

. . . prophesied of the destruction of that great people except they should repent, . . . (Ether 11:1.)

As the end approached, Ether,

. . . did cry from the morning even until the going down of the sun, exhorting the people to believe in God unto repentance lest they should be destroyed, . . . (*Ibid.*, 12:3.)

The prophets were rejected and the Jaredite nation perished.

". . . in the . . . reign of Zedekiah . . . came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem," would be destroyed with many of its inhabitants, while others, "should be carried away captive into Babylon." (1 Nephi 1:4, 13.) The prophets and their message were rejected, and the Babylonian captivity followed.

Jesus told the multitude at Jerusalem that their rejection of him would bring desolation to their homeland; the buildings of the temple would be thrown down, and not one stone would be left upon another; that in the destruction the Jews would suffer great tribulation, and thereafter be scattered upon the earth to be hated of all nations. True, they crucified Jesus for his warning. But Titus besieged Jerusalem. The temple was destroyed, and the Jews were scattered.

We today are at the crossroads of another cycle in the universal pattern, a cycle fraught with everlasting consequences. Whether it shall close in the light or in the shadow is for us to determine. The ominous signs are upon us, and the issues are crystal clear.



Our whole world is in confusion. The wisdom of our wise men has proved inadequate to stay the rising crisis. With the means to unleash universal destruction in the hands of evil men, fear and apprehension ride with every breeze. In the past, situations similar to ours have generally terminated in destruction. It would seem that the judgments of God are about to be once more poured out upon the nations.

The world situation being as it is, I feel impelled to emphasize the fact that, as already pointed out with respect to similar situations in the past, the Lord saw this one coming, and, in harmony with his universal pattern, sounded the warning and prescribed the means of escape. For although the pattern is universal so that the lesson may be clearly drawn from history, the Lord always warns the people of a new dispensation through prophets raised up unto them in their own day. This he has done for this generation through the great prophet of the restoration, Joseph Smith, Jr. Through him the Lord repeatedly declared that the world was ripening in iniquity and that unless men repented destruction would overtake them.

For example, in March 1829, he said:

. . . a desolating scourge shall go forth among the inhabitants of the earth, and shall continue to be poured out from time to time, if they repent not, until the earth is empty, and the inhabitants thereof are consumed away and utterly destroyed by the brightness of my coming.

Behold, I tell you these things, even as I also told the people of the destruction of Jerusalem; and my word shall be verified at this time as it hath hitherto been verified. (D & C 5:19-20.)

You will note that this prediction, as were like predictions in the past, is conditional. "If they repent not," is the condition. For this generation as for all others, the Lord has provided the means of escape. This means is now, and has always been, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the preface to the Doctrine and Covenants, the book in which the revelations sounding the warning and declaring anew the saving principles and ordinances of the gospel are published, the Lord said:

Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments;

And also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world. (*Ibid.*, 1:17-18.)

"These things" are, of course, the revelations published in the Doctrine and Covenants. In them the issues of our day are as clearly set before us as

were the issues of the past set before the antediluvians by Noah; the Jaredites by Ether; the people of Zedekiah by Jeremiah; the Jews by the Master. They are set before us as clearly as they were set before the Nephites by Nephi and the Resurrected Jesus.

By spurning the warning and rejecting the means of escape, we shall most certainly bring upon ourselves the predicted destruction, for the words of Jesus, "Although . . . heaven and earth shall pass away; . . . my words shall not pass away," (Joseph Smith 1:35) are still immutable.

On the other hand, if men will hearken to and accept the means of escape, the gospel of Jesus Christ as restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the rewards shall as certainly follow. Fears will give way to confidence; war clouds will fade; righteousness will come; peace will reign. Again there shall return to earth that glorious state of felicity which blessed the Nephites in the days of Jesus. To these truths I bear witness.

When I see the tangible evidence of them in the light shining from the faces and the happiness enjoyed by those in every land who receive and live the

gospel, there wells up in my heart the desires expressed by Alma when he said:

O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people!

Yea, I would declare unto every soul, as with the voice of thunder, repentance and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth. (Alma 29:1-2.)

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ACCEPTANCE

Hugh B. Brown
of the Council of the Twelve

My dear brethren and sisters, I respond to this call in deep humility, with a keen sense of my own inadequacy, but with confidence in my Brethren who have thought me worthy of it. I shall spend the balance of my life trying to make their judgment good.

I could mention many to whom I am indebted, as others have done. I shall not take that time. I cannot, however, refrain from speaking of my angel mother, who, when I was a little child, had faith in my destiny, and all through my life helped me to believe and try to be worthy of it.

I would be ungrateful if I did not acknowledge that Zina Card Brown, my beloved wife, is more responsible for my being here today than am I. To these two women I am profoundly grateful and thank God for their lives and their influence on my life.

I thank President McKay for his con-

fidence. I love him with all my heart. It has been my privilege to do some little work with and for him to help to take a little of the burden from his heart. I thank God for that association. I love and honor his Counselors and the members of the Quorum of the Twelve, each one of whom I know, in each one of whom I have absolute confidence. I restate my faith. I rededicate my life. I thank you for your confidence. I pray for forgiveness of my weaknesses and sins, and ask for your charity and tolerance and for God's blessings, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

a SUMMATION and a BLESSING

President David O. McKay

And now another annual conference of the Church has become history. In conclusion, none of us should leave this conference, *first*, without a resolution in his or her heart to live a better life. True religion cannot be worn only on Sundays, laid aside as you put aside your Sunday clothes, and left to lie in mothballs during the week. True spirituality should be expressed in daily activity. That has been a theme of this great conference.

No father, no mother, no husband, no wife, and no children who have been here in attendance with them should return home without going into a better home than that which they left when they came. No fathers and mothers

who have listened in can be true to their ideals as members, and to the noble thoughts inspired by the remarks of these Brethren of the General Authorities, without living tonight and in the future in a more spiritual home than heretofore. That is our duty.

No man or woman who has listened in can be true to himself or to herself without doing something to make life sweeter and better in their home than it was. That is our responsibility.

Secondly, the great theme has been that salvation and peace, contentment of the human family, not only in the home but also in community life, will come through obedience to the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It has been the season of Easter, and every speaker has referred to the salvation, glorified life, the eternal gospel of the Resurrected Christ. We cannot be true to ourselves and to our loved ones and our associates, without being determined to live more in accordance with those divine principles. I mean in daily life, in our speech, in our self-control, in home associations, with business associates, in political fields—that is the obligation we have taken upon us by

participating in the high ideals of the messages given by these speakers.

We cannot be true to ourselves and to our loved ones, to our associates, without feeling a determination to know more about this great truth to which testimonies have been borne. The spirit within bears testimony that truth exists in this old world, and the spirit feeds upon that truth. I have much to say, but I shall summarize it, because of the lateness of the hour, by applying to the truth of the gospel what Mr. Jordan says about truth in general:

We cannot truly believe that we are the children of God and that God exists without believing in the final inevitable triumph of truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And as we leave this conference we shall have less worry about the destruction of the world and the present civilization because God has established his Church, never to be thrown down or given to another people, and as God lives and his people are true to him and to one another we need not worry about the ultimate triumph of truth.

If you have that testimony of truth on your side, you can pass through the dark valley of slander, misrepresentation,