

Bearing Record of Christ

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husband, father, grandfather.*

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It is a pleasure to welcome you to the Marriott Center and the first session of the 2001 Women's Conference. This event is sponsored by Brigham Young University and the Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Today, approximately twenty thousand sisters will join us on campus. In addition, more than a million will view selected portions of the conference on television, satellite, and the Internet. The off-campus audience will cover the globe, with many members in the United States able to see the proceedings in their homes via BYU-TV. In addition, there will be members and friends in Europe, Asia, Latin America, Africa, and Australia who will connect through the satellite and the internet.

May I share with you parts of three e-mail responses to the new BYU-TV channel? These e-mails will illustrate the reach of this conference. BYU-TV is a new channel, different from KBYU-TV. The programming is largely devotionals, firesides, general conference talks, campus symposia, films, sports, and various enrichment programs. It is available on the Dish and Direct-TV satellite networks and will soon be available on a number of cable channels including AT&T Broadband. The e-mail messages I will read describe how many sisters around the world will be watching Women's Conference with us. The first message is from Sister Ellen Garrison:

"I just wanted to take this moment to thank you for the inspirational programming that comes into our home now everyday . . . I start every day with classes and devotionals . . . It has made such a difference in the atmosphere of this household, and strengthened my testimony beyond any words that I can use to tell you . . . it has made a world of difference to me out here in the hills of Alabama."[1](#)

The second e-mail comes from Sister Rosemary Thompson in Herefordshire, England. She reports:

"I am writing from Herefordshire, England. I am in my home three miles from Benbow Farm where Wilford Woodruff baptized so many. A few years ago my husband installed satellite equipment that allows me to pick up the Church TV channel . . . [now] I am receiving BYU-TV programmes on the Church satellite and enjoying them. Eight miles away, on the other side of the Malvern hills, another member is also receiving your programmes, and I know there are others dotted around England. . . . When our equipment was installed, it was with the intention of just watching general conferences, so this is a very exciting development for us."[2](#)

The final e-mail comes from Brother Per Borgen, who is living on a small island in the Baltic Sea. He writes:

"Last year Ronne branch on the little island Bornholm—out in the Baltic Sea—bought its own

satellite equipment in order to take down the general conferences and firesides being more than 100 miles (over sea) from the nearest stake center—Copenhagen. . . . And now, to our happy surprise, BYU-TV is on the feed whenever there is no conference/fireside. My wife and I simply love to watch BYU-TV—it just carries a nice spirit along with its programs. . . . Thanks for giving us an alternative channel to all the other channels out there." [3](#)

So, today, I not only welcome the sisters gathered in the Marriott Center on campus but also welcome Sister Garrison, Sister Thompson, the Ronne Branch, and all the other sisters and brothers watching in far way places. We know you will enjoy the proceedings.

The theme of this year's conference is taken from Doctrine and Covenants 68:6, which reads:

"Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come."

The scripture reminds us of our responsibility to be ardent witnesses for the Savior, who is the Son of the living God. In this regard, I will address two questions. The first is, "To whom shall we bear record?" All of us understand that every nation, kindred, tongue, and people must hear the gospel. But are there priorities? The second question concerns the message that we share: "As Latter-day Saints, what do we know that will help others know Christ and teach them that He was, that He is and that He will come again?" Latter-day Saint doctrine provides a unique understanding of the Father and the Son and our relationship with them. The Savior said in his intercessory prayer that it is "life eternal, [to] know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Through the restored gospel we know more about the Father and Son than any other people. Thus, we carry a major responsibility to share that knowledge with the world.

To Whom Shall We Bear Record?

Our first responsibility in teaching the gospel and bearing witness of Christ is to our own family. Someone has said that the Church is only one generation away from extinction. The family is a divine institution designed to build faith in each succeeding generation. Links in the chain may have been broken many times, but the design calls for an unbroken chain from Adam to the last, faithful child born. Children can live on borrowed light for a limited time only. They must be taught and encouraged to obtain their own witness so they may choose to be obedient to gospel truths. From Adam to the present day, the building of intergenerational families of faith has been the hallmark of Zion (Moses 5:12; Deuteronomy 6:6-7; D&C 68:25, 28). The plan of happiness is dependent on linking parents to children and children to parents-in faith and by covenant. Can you imagine a world in which parents do not want to associate with their children or children with their parents? Most families have close ties and want to preserve them. This can only be done through special priesthood keys.

On the evening of 21 September 1823, Moroni promised Joseph Smith that Elijah the prophet would return with the sealing power. In explaining the importance of Elijah's visit, Moroni stated that "the whole earth would be utterly wasted" if the "hearts of the children" were not turned to their parents and the parents to the children (D&C 2:3, 2). Children must be taught the gospel in order for their hearts to be turned fully to their parents. One major purpose of this earth is the creation of families, both for mortality and for eternity.

The same section of the Doctrine and Covenants from which this year's theme is drawn states clearly the Lord's instructions to parents in Zion. They are to teach their children "the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost . . . [and] to pray, and . . . walk uprightly before the Lord" (D&C 68:25, 28).

The Proclamation on the Family issued by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve

Apostles reconfirms the importance of home and family in the Lord's plan. In part it states:

"By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners."[4](#)

As mothers, grandmothers, sisters, and aunts, you have a special role to play in the lives of children. Although both parents are responsible for teaching the young, women are equipped with a special, spiritual gift of nurturing which creates a bond with children and makes women effective teachers. I am reminded of the stripling warriors of Helaman, who were taught the gospel by their mothers. Helaman describes these young men as follows:

"They were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted. . . . they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them. And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it" (Alma 53:20; 56:47-48).

The two thousand young men knew that if they were faithful, God would protect them. How did they know? Because their mothers had a witness that God would spare them, according to their faith. The influence of a mother is profound.

In a recent general conference talk, President Boyd K. Packer described the role of parents in preparing their children to withstand the fiery darts of the adversary. He said:

"The plan designed by the Father contemplates that man and woman, husband and wife, working together, fit each child individually with a shield of faith made to buckle on so firmly that it can neither be pulled off nor penetrated by those fiery darts.

"It takes the steady strength of a father to hammer out the metal of it and the tender hands of a mother to polish and fit it on. Sometimes one parent is left to do it alone. It is difficult, but it can be done."[5](#)

The first responsibility is to bear record of Christ to our family, to help each member put on the shield of faith. The Church can assist, but most of the work must be done in the home. It is critical that each faithful generation be linked with the next so men and women may receive a fulness of joy and the earth fulfill its purpose and destiny.

When we have taken care of our families, our second responsibility is to our neighbor. Mostly likely she is across the street or around the corner, but she may also be in a far corner of the earth. Unless we have a formal mission call, however, most of our work will be done within the community in which we live.

Love is key to proclaiming the gospel. It softens hearts and opens doors. Jesus said that His disciples would be known by the love they have for one another (John 13:35). I believe that missionaries in the field receive a special gift of love for the people they are called to serve. Often you hear newly returned missionaries say that they served in the greatest mission and among the best people on earth. Often these feelings come early in their mission as a gift from the Holy Ghost to help them become effective teachers and witnesses. Love is a gift of the Spirit for which we should pray, asking the Lord to bless us with special feelings for those whom we may influence.

The parable of the good Samaritan teaches us how to build strong relationships with our neighbor. It is through acts of service. The Levite and the priest did not want to be involved and passed by on

the other side. Sometimes, we, like the two priests, pass by opportunities to serve others, particularly with respect to sharing the gospel. The reason for not becoming involved may differ. Generally, we worry that we will offend our neighbor. If this is the case, why not follow the example of the good Samaritan? He did not ask the man his religion or try to convert him while he was lying on the ground. He simply bound up the man's wounds, set him on his animal, took him to the nearest inn, and paid for his care (Luke 10:30-37).

As members of the Church, we can serve our neighbors with quiet acts of kindness and pray that they will ask us questions that will open the door to share those things which are most precious. Over time, neighbors will experience significant events that will open doors to teach fundamental truths. These events include births, death, and marriages. There will be trials in their paths, and the plan of salvation is like the balm of Gilead—it will heal their wounds and soothe their pain.

We should look for natural opportunities to offer gospel insights and invite friends to participate with us. Humanitarian service projects represent an opportunity. Most people are interested in relieving suffering. When others participate with us in such projects, they become invested with us and have a stake in the venture. A relationship of trust is established, and opportunities to share emerge.

Given that we are to bear record of Christ first with our family and then with our friends, what can we share that is crucial to their salvation? The gospel message centers in Christ. As noted earlier, we know more about His life, His being, His relationship to the Father, and His atoning sacrifice than any other people on earth. The truths regarding Christ are an integral part of the plan. They help us understand who He was and who He is and that He is to come.

A Unique Message Concerning Christ

The unique truths of the restored gospel concerning Christ can best be explained by following the format outlined in the theme of this conference. In Doctrine and Covenants 68:6, the Lord tells Joseph Smith how we should bear record of Him—that He is the "Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come." The statement emphasizes the relationship Christ has with the Father in the context of His premortal life, His life on earth, and His future return.

The most important fact to know about Christ is that He is the literal Son of the living God. Most Christian creeds recognize that Christ is the Son, but they do not know what that means. The Athanasian creed teaches that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost form a Trinity but they are unified in One Substance. Each of them is Incomprehensible, but there is only One Incomprehensible. Each is eternal, but there is only One Eternal.⁶ The major Protestant churches teach that God is "without body, parts, or passions."⁷ Elder James E. Talmage commented on these statements as follows:

"It would be difficult to conceive of a greater number of inconsistencies and contradictions, expressed in words as few. . . . The immateriality of God as asserted in these declarations of sectarian faith is entirely at variance with the scriptures, and absolutely contradicted by the revelations of God's person and attributes."⁸

Fortunately for us, the First Vision clearly establishes the individuality of the Father and the Son—each has an immortalized, glorified body of flesh and bones. Revelation also teaches that the Holy Ghost is a separate personage but one of spirit (Joseph Smith—History 1:16-17; D&C 130:22). A review of the Savior's premortality, His time on earth, and His future return will put in perspective the important relationship that Christ has with the Father. It also helps us understand our relationship to them.

The Premortal World—I Was

Through modern-day revelation we learn that Christ had a conscious, intelligent existence as a personage of spirit before coming to this earth (Abraham 3:27-28). We believe that Christ was the firstborn spirit son of Heavenly Parents, with God as His Father (Colossians 1:15; D&C 110:4).

Modern revelation teaches that "spirit is matter, but it is more refined or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes" (D&C 131:7). Thus a spirit person is not an ethereal wisp of nothingness. A spirit person consists of matter that resembles a person in the flesh. We further believe that every person born on this earth lived in that same premortal world of spirits and was an intelligent offspring of that same Father with Jesus as our eldest Brother (Numbers 16:22; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 2:17; Abraham 3:27-28).

In the premortal world Jesus was known as Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament (1 Nephi 21:26; Moses 3:5-8). Through his seniority as the oldest and because of the light and truth within him, He attained Godhood before coming to earth (John 1:1). We also know that He was the Creator of the worlds under the direction of the Father (Moses 1:32-33).

All of us are aware of the Grand Council that took place in the world of spirits and the plan presented by the Father for the progression of His children. We know of Satan's opposition, that he was cast out and he drew many spirits with him. The Father's plan granted us agency, the right to choose good or evil, and the Father knew that all of us would sin. The only way to reach our ultimate goal was through a Savior, someone who would voluntarily perform the Atonement and pay the price for the repentant sinner. Jesus, or Jehovah, was called and foreordained to be the sacrificial lamb—the mediator of the covenant made between the Father and His children (1 Peter 1:19-20; Abraham 3:22-28).

Our doctrines concerning the premortal world are unique. They are not generally understood by others. Most do not understand that we lived before coming to earth and that mortality is the second act in a multiact drama.

There are four stages through which the spirit personage passes. The first is the unembodied state in the spirit world, of which we have been speaking. The second is an embodied state, which is earth life, or mortality. The third is a disembodied state—the time between death and resurrection. A reembodied, or resurrected, state is the final stage. Every spirit person passes through these stages. There are still individuals waiting in the spirit world for their turn in mortality. At the present time, six billion people are living on earth "to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them" (Abraham 3:25). And billions have passed on to the postmortal sphere to await the resurrection. The Savior and the righteous who lived prior to his time plus a few others have reached the fourth or final stage, that of reembodiment (Matthew 27:52-53; Joseph Smith-History 1:33). In every phase or estate we are dependent on Christ and His atonement, even in the premortal world (D&C 93:38; John 15:1-8; D&C 138; Moroni 10:32-33).[9](#)

Mortality-I AM

I AM was His name, meaning Jehovah. The second stage of the Savior's life was mortality, or life on earth. The Savior's unique earthly heritage received from a mortal mother and an immortal Father is critical to understanding His mission and atonement. From Mary He received the seeds of mortality, which gave him the capacity to die. As the Only Begotten in the flesh, He obtained immortal seeds from His Father, which meant that He could live forever (John 1:14). He is not only the Son of the living God in the world of spirits but also the Son of the living God in mortality. Jesus told His listeners on one occasion, "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (John 5:26). Later Jesus told the Jews: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:17-18).

Jesus had the power to live forever. Death for Him was a choice. He did not have to die. The Atonement was a voluntary sacrifice by an infinite and eternal Being (Alma 34:10, 14). Because of His immortal heritage, He had the capacity to suffer the consequences of sin for all mankind. The

Savior revealed to the Prophet Joseph the awfulness of that experience. He said:

"For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; . . . Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink" (D&C 19:16, 18).

In addition to sin, He experienced the pains, sufferings, sicknesses, temptations, and weaknesses of each person who has ever lived on the earth or who ever will live on it, in order to "know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:11-12). The Atonement was not only infinite and eternal in its consequences but also intimate. Jesus came to know each of us in a way that allows Him to support us in times of need, to heal the broken heart, to perfect us and to pull us under his wings (Moroni 10:32-33).

Sisters, we know so much more than any other people about Christ, His mission, His atoning sacrifice and His power. It is important that we share this knowledge with others and bring them to Christ.

We also have a clearer view of the resurrection and its importance because we understand the role played by the physical body in the eternities. In contrast to much of Christianity, which believes that the body shackles the spirit, we recognize the body as one of the grand prizes of mortality. Although we have aches and pains in this life, we look forward to the day when our bodies and spirits are inseparably connected through the resurrection, bringing us a fulness of joy (D&C 93:33-34). In that day the body will be incorruptible, resistant to disease, decay, and death. And it will have the power of eternal life if we prove worthy (D&C 131:4).

He Will Come Again

Prophets from the beginning of time have prophesied not only of Jesus' first coming but also of His second. The first time He came as a newborn babe, in humility and lowliness of heart. His second coming will be in power and great glory (Matthew 25:31). He will come unexpectedly. Peter said that He "will come as a thief in the night" (2 Peter 3:10). His first visit will be to one of His homes- the temple (Malachi 3:1).

He will also visit the Mount of Olives, the scene of His discussion with the Twelve regarding His second coming. The prophet Zechariah prophesied that Jesus would stand on the Mount and show those there the marks of the crucifixion. In turn, the people will ask, "What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends" (Zechariah 13:6; 14:4). Zechariah indicates that there will be great mourning in Jerusalem as they look upon him whom they pierced, "and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" (Zechariah 12:10-11). Zechariah understood the relationship of the Savior to the Father both in the premortal sphere as well as in mortality.

As Zechariah notes, Jesus will return with the marks in his hands, feet, and side as identifiers of His crucifixion and atonement. Just as the Nephites were overcome with his presence, so the Jews will recognize the great sacrifice He made for them and for all mankind. I suspect He will extend to the Jews the same opportunity He gave the Nephites—to come one by one to "thrust their hands into his side, and [to] feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet" that they may "know of a surety and . . . bear record, that it [is] he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come" (3 Nephi 11:15).

One of the signs of the Second Coming is that the gospel will be "preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations" (Matthew 24:14; JS-M 1:33). The process is well underway with missionaries in about 70 percent of the countries of the earth. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-

day Saints takes seriously the missionary responsibility of carrying the gospel to the four corners of the earth. Within eighteen months of the establishment of the Church, Joseph Smith was told by the Lord that the restored gospel should be taken to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. And the servants of God shall go forth, saying with a loud voice: Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come" (D&C 133:37-38).

The Lord's directive is still in force. Sisters, the opportunity is ours to share the singular message of the restored gospel with our family and our neighbors. There is so much to offer.

I bear witness that Jesus is the Son of the living God, our eldest Brother in the spirit world. He was foreordained before the foundations of this earth to be the Savior of all mankind. This earth was his footstool. This is the earth chosen from among all the earths He created to be the place of his birth, ministry, and atonement. It is from this earth that He took up an immortalized, glorified, resurrected body. I am so grateful that He did not shrink in partaking of the bitter cup.

I know that the day will come when you and I will kneel at His feet and express our deep humility and love for Him. I also know that if we are worthy, we will each have a companion by our side as well as our family. I witness that the Father and the Son are personally interested and involved with each of us to the extent that we are willing to listen to the Spirit. It is my prayer that we will prove faithful, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

[1](#) Ellen Garrison, e-mail in possession of author.

[2](#) Rosemary Thompson, email in possession of author.

[3](#) Per Borgen, e-mail in possession of author.

[4](#) First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, November 1995, 102.

[5](#) Boyd K. Packer, "The Shield of Faith," *Ensign*, May 1995, 8.

[6](#) Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 55-56; s.v. "Athanasian Creed."

[7](#) James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1955), 48.

[8](#) *Ibid.*, 48.

[9](#) See Robert J. Matthews, *Behold the Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1994), 3-4.

