

Prepare Yourselves for the Great Day of the Lord

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I am especially happy to see so many attending this devotional this morning when the competition “out of this world” is being televised. While we are concerned that the astronauts will arrive home safely, as we have prayed this morning, it is good that so many of you are here to learn more about how you may return safely home to your Father in Heaven. My beloved brothers and sisters, this is a thrilling sight. I’ve been uplifted by the lovely music and the spirit of this occasion. I am proud of the great work being done on this campus. I commend you for the counsel given by your president this morning. May I say you cannot do wrong and feel right. It is impossible.

I want you to know that it is a great honor to be with you and feel of your spirit. You young men and women are choice spirits; you were reserved for this special time; you have a unique task to accomplish in this world, and our prayers are constantly with you that you will live up to the expectations the Lord has for you. We love you. We have confidence in you. We pray for you.

The people of every generation, I suppose, see the time in which they live as being exceptional. The truth of the matter is that you do live in a most exceptional time in the history of the world. You young people will see events transpire which were promised from the

beginning of the world. Prophets of old have seen your days and rejoiced in them. And yet, you will face challenges and circumstances the severity of which has been unparalleled in generations past. For this you must be prepared.

Today, I speak to you about the times in which you live and about the quality of faith you will need to survive some of the difficulties yet to be experienced. I speak as one who loves you and has been given a responsibility, with my Brethren, “to testify and warn” about the impending crises facing mankind. I speak to you to the topic “Prepare yourselves for the great day of the Lord.”

I speak to you on this subject, for I feel it is needed because of rumors, writings, and tape recordings that have recently circulated among the Saints and that have created among some of our Church members a feeling of uncertainty. It calls to mind the counsel given by President Harold B. Lee:

Ezra Taft Benson was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this fireside address was given at Brigham Young University on 14 April 1981.

There are among us many loose writings predicting the calamities which are about to overtake us. Some of these have been publicized as though they were necessary to wake up the world to the horrors about to overtake us. Many of these are from sources upon which there cannot be unquestioned reliance.

*Are you . . . aware of the fact that we need no such publications to be forewarned, if we were only conversant with what the scriptures have already spoken to us in plainness? ["Admonitions for the Priesthood of God," *Ensign*, January 1973, p. 106]*

That is precisely the way the Brethren feel today. So, today, I shall quote liberally from the words of the Lord to our dispensation in order that you will have, from the Lord himself, guidance on future prophecy.

Fulfillment of Prophecy

During the last week of our Lord's mortal life, he was privately approached on the Mount of Olives by his disciples. They asked him two questions, the first of which was:

Tell us, when shall these things be which thou has said concerning the destruction of the temple, and the Jews? [JST Matthew 24:4]

The basis for their earnest inquiry was a prophecy of Jesus that had left even the disciples stunned. While standing in the temple precincts, Jesus had declared:

There shall not be left here upon this temple, one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. [JST Matthew 24:2]

The temple in Jerusalem was a magnificent structure. It rested on the same site as the temple of Solomon, which had been largely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in the siege of Jerusalem. With the

help of King Cyrus the Great, whom the Lord inspired, the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity and erected a second temple, though much inferior to Solomon's. Later, Herod the Great became the leader and undertook to reconstruct the temple. He spared no expense on labor or materials to restore that building to the beauty and magnificence of the days of Solomon. The project took about 46 years to complete, six years longer than the Salt Lake Temple in pioneer days. According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, some of the stones used in the foundation were prodigious in size, measuring approximately 60 feet in length. Can you imagine how improbable it must have seemed to Jesus' disciples that one stone would not be left on another? Yet, 37 years later, when the Romans invaded Jerusalem, that prophecy was literally fulfilled. It is said that after Roman soldiers burned the temple, they dug up the foundation stones in the hopes of finding a treasure buried there.

The Savior also prophesied concerning the fate of the Jewish nation:

This people shall be destroyed and scattered among all nations

And it shall come to pass that this generation of Jews shall not pass away until every desolation which I have told you concerning them shall come to pass. [D&C 45:19, 21]

That desolation came as predicted. In 66 A.D., the Jews rebelled against the Romans. The Roman army invaded Judea, and, in one of the most bloody and horrible sieges in history, Jerusalem was eventually overcome. The siege lasted for about four years. During that time, it was estimated that over one million Jews were killed, and 97,000 were taken captive and sold as slaves.

Thus you see, in just four decades following the Crucifixion, the nation, the city, and the temple were all destroyed! As one modern historian recorded,

*The destruction of the Temple marked the end . . . of the Jewish state. . . . Judea was almost shorn of Jews, and those that remained lived on the edge of starvation. [Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, The Story of Civilization (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944), 3:545]*

Later in the first century A.D., the Jews, under the leadership of a false messiah, again attempted to recover their homeland. The Romans also crushed that rebellion; Judea was laid waste, and the remaining Jews were scattered throughout the Empire. Again the historian chronicled the literal fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in these words:

No other people has ever known so long an exile, or so hard a fate Scattered into every province and beyond, condemned to poverty and humiliation, unbefriended even by philosophers and saints, they retired from public affairs into private study and worship. [Caesar and Christ, 3:549]

The prophecy of Jesus was sure and certain: "This people shall be destroyed and scattered among all nations." A lesson drawn from the Jewish catastrophe, and applicable to our times, was given by the Lord himself in modern revelation:

My word shall not pass away; but all shall be fulfilled. [JST Matthew 24:36; emphasis added]

Prophecies Being Fulfilled

The second question asked by the disciples on the Mount of Olives, and the one pertinent to our time, was;

What is the sign of thy coming; and of the end of the world? (or the destruction of the wicked, which is the end of the world.) [JST Matthew 24:4]

The Lord has designated these days in which we live as the "times of the Gentiles"

(Luke 21:24). The Gentile nations are the so-called Christian nations—North and South America and the European nations from which many of us came. The phrase *times of the Gentiles* refers to that period of time extending from when the gospel was restored to the world (1830) to when the gospel will again be preached to the Jews—after the Gentiles have rejected it. This is how the Lord explained it:

And when the times of the Gentiles is come in, a light shall break forth among them that sit in darkness, and it shall be the fullness of my gospel;

But they receive it not; for they perceive not the light, and they turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men.

And in that generation shall the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. [D&C 45:28–30]

We will know when the times of the Gentiles are approaching fulfillment by these signs:

And in that day shall be heard of wars and rumors of wars, and the whole earth shall be in commotion, and men's hearts shall fail them, and they shall say that Christ delayeth his coming until the end of the earth.

And the love of men shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound. [D&C 45:26–27]

And again, this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come, or the destruction of the wicked. [JST Matthew 24:32]

Are we not witnessing the fulfillment of these signs today? The gospel is being extended to all nations which permit our missionaries to penetrate their countries. The Church is prospering and growing. Yet in undiminished fury, and with an anxiety that his time is short—and it is—Satan, that great adversary of all of us, is attempting to destroy all we hold dear. We constantly hear or read of wars and rumors of wars. Atheism,

agnosticism, immorality, and dishonesty are flaunted in our society. Desertions, cruelty, divorce, and infidelity have become commonplace, leading to a disintegration of the family. Truly we live in the times of which the Savior spoke, when “the love of men shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound.”

Prophecies to Be Fulfilled

The rejection of the testimony of the servants of God by the nations of the world will bring the consequence of greater calamities, for the Lord himself declared:

For after your testimony cometh the testimony of earthquakes, that shall cause groanings in the midst of her, and men shall fall upon the ground and shall not be able to stand.

And also cometh the testimony of the voice of thunders, and the voice of lightnings, and the voice of tempests, and the voice of the waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds.

And all things shall be in commotion; and surely, men’s hearts shall fail them; for fear shall come upon all people. [D&C 88:89–91]

And there shall be men standing in that generation, that shall not pass until they shall see an overflowing scourge; for a desolating sickness shall cover the land.

But my disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved; but among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices and curse God and die.

And there shall be earthquakes also in divers places, and many desolations; yet men will harden their hearts against me, and they will take up the sword, one against another, and they will kill one another. [D&C 45:31–33]

The world will present a scene of conflict such as has never been experienced before. Still, men’s hearts will be hardened to the revelations from heaven. Even greater signs shall then be given to manifest the approaching great day of the Lord.

And they shall see signs and wonders, for they shall be shown forth in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath.

And they shall behold blood, and fire, and vapors of smoke.

And before the day of the Lord shall come, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon be turned into blood, and the stars shall fall from heaven. [D&C 45:40–42]

I realize this is an unpleasant topic on which to dwell. I take no delight in its portrayal, nor do I look forward to the day when calamities shall come with increasing number upon humanity. But these words are not my own; the Lord has spoken them. Knowing what we know as his servants, can we hesitate to raise a warning voice to all who will listen that they may be prepared for the days ahead? Silence in the face of such calamity is sin!

But to an otherwise gloomy picture there is a bright side—the coming of our Lord in all his glory. His coming will be both glorious and terrible, depending on the spiritual condition of those who remain.

One appearance will be to the righteous Saints who have gathered to the New Jerusalem here in America. In this place of refuge they will be safe from the wrath of the Lord which will be poured out without measure on all nations. Modern revelation provides this description:

And the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it, and it shall be called Zion.

And it shall come to pass among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety.

And there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another. [D&C 45: 67–69]

Another appearance of the Lord will be to the Jews. To these beleaguered sons of Judah, surrounded by hostile Gentile armies, who again threaten to overrun Jerusalem, the Savior—their Messiah—will set his feet on the Mount of Olives,

and it shall cleave in twain, and the earth shall tremble, and reel to and fro, and the heavens also shall shake. [D&C 45:47]

The Lord himself will then rout the Gentile armies, decimating their forces (see Ezekiel 38, 39). Judah will be spared, no longer to be persecuted and scattered. The Jews will then approach their Deliverer and ask, “What are these wounds in thine hands and in thy feet?”

I will say unto them: These wounds are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. I am he who was lifted up. I am Jesus that was crucified. I am the Son of God.

And then shall they weep because of their iniquities; then shall they lament because they persecuted their king. [D&C 45: 52–53]

What a touching drama this will be! Jesus—Prophet, Messiah, King—will be welcomed in his own country!

Jerusalem will become an eternal city of peace!

The sons of Judah will see this promise fulfilled:

After their pain [the tribe of Judah] shall be sanctified in holiness before the Lord, to dwell in his presence day and night, forever and ever. [D&C 133:25]

Yet another appearance of Christ will be to the rest of the world. Here is his description of his coming:

The Lord shall be red in his apparel, and his garments like him that treadeth in the wine-vat.

And so great shall be the glory of his presence that the sun shall hide his face in shame, and the moon shall withhold its light, and the stars shall be hurled from their places. [D&C 133:48–49]

All nations will see him

In the clouds of heaven, clothed with power and great glory; with all the holy angels. . . .

And the Lord shall utter his voice, and all the ends of the earth shall hear it; and the nations of the earth shall mourn, and they that have laughed shall see their folly.

And calamity shall cover the mocker, and the scorner shall be consumed; and they that have watched for iniquity shall be hewn down and cast into the fire. [D&C 45:44, 49, 50]

When the Savior spoke of these signs and prophecies to his disciples in Jerusalem, they were apprehensive. He said to them, *Be not troubled, for, when all these things shall come to pass, ye may know that the promises which have been made unto you shall be fulfilled. [D&C 45:35; emphasis added]*

The Preparation

Saints of Zion, do you realize we are living in the days of the fulfillment of these signs and wonders? You are among those who will see many of these prophecies fulfilled. Just as certain as was the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem and the scattering of the Jews, so shall these words of the Savior be certain to your generation.

We know not the day nor the hour of his coming, but of this you may feel assured: You stand close to the great day of the Lord! In his words of modern revelation, we say to you,

Seek the face of the Lord, always. [D&C 101:38]

You will live in the midst of economic, political, and spiritual instability. When you see these signs—unmistakable evidences that his coming is nigh—*be not troubled, but, “stand*

... in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come" (D&C 87:8). Holy men and holy women stand in holy places, and these holy places include our temples, our chapels, our homes, and the stakes of Zion, which are, as the Lord declares, "for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth" (D&C 115:6).

Heed the Lord's counsel to the Saints of this dispensation:

Prepare yourselves for the great day of the Lord.
[D&C 133:10]

This preparation must consist of more than just casual membership in the Church. You must learn to be guided by personal revelation and the counsel of the living prophet so you will not be deceived. Our Lord has indicated who, among Church members, will stand when he appears:

And at that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins.

For they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day.

And the earth shall be given unto them for an inheritance; and they shall multiply and wax strong, and their children shall grow up without sin unto salvation.

For the Lord shall be in their midst, and his glory shall be upon them, and he will be their king and their lawgiver. [D&C 45:56–59; emphasis added]

President Wilford Woodruff further prophesied in 1894:

Can you tell me where the people are who will be shielded and protected from these great calamities and judgments which are even now at our door? I'll tell you. The priesthood of God who honor their priesthood and who are worthy of their blessings are the only ones who shall have this safety and protection. They are the only mortal beings. No other people have a right to be shielded from these judgments. They are at our very doors; not even this people will escape them entirely. [Susa Young Gates, "The Temple Workers' Excursion," *Young Women's Journal* June 1894, p. 512]

If you are to preserve your blessings, it is not enough for you just to be free and independent, to capitalize on your advantages so that they accrue to your well-being and prosperity. You must protect and safeguard the freedom you have. You must be *wise* and *virtuous*. You must govern your natures by the doctrines of his kingdom. You must be valiant in your testimony of Christ by keeping all his commandments.

Will you be among those who are faithful to the end? Will you endure? Are you prepared? Can you live in the world and not partake of the sins of the world? Will you "arise and shine forth" as the Lord has commanded? Will you be a light and "standard for the nations"? We know you can. We pray you will. We have every confidence that you, "the rising generation," will not falter. I repeat: You are valiant spirits reserved for this exceptional time. Make the choice: Rise to the task of this momentous hour!

As a special witness of our Lord, I humbly declare to you that he lives, that he is close to his servants. His word "shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by [his] own voice or by the voice of [his] servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38). I testify that you can rely on his promises.

God lives; Jesus is the Christ. These two heavenly Beings did in very deed appear to Joseph Smith in the greatest event that has

occurred in this world since the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is my testimony to you, my beloved brethren and sisters, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.