

“All Are Alike Unto God”

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This multistake fireside that brings you together each month is the largest in the Church, and it is an honor to be invited to address you. I have a deep awareness of the responsibility associated with this honor and therefore seek the guidance of the Spirit and pray that I might have utterance to portray to you some of the thoughts that are on my mind.

Brigham Young University is distinctive. It is, as it were, a gathering place for children of our Father from many nationalities and cultures around the world. The campus and those who come here are testaments to the truth that the gospel of Jesus Christ transcends nationality and color, crosses cultural lines, and blends distinctiveness into a common brotherhood. This is the way the Church feels about each of you—and it is about this common brotherhood that I wish to speak.

I take as a theme a passage from the Book of Mormon referring to the Lord’s relationship to the children of men throughout the earth in which it is stated:

... And he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile. [2 Nephi 26:33]

From this statement it is clear that *all* men are invited to come unto him and *all* are alike unto him. Race makes no difference; color makes no difference; nationality makes no difference. The brotherhood of man is literal. We are all of one blood and the literal spirit offspring of our eternal Heavenly Father. Before we came to earth, we belonged to his eternal family. We associated and knew each other there. Our common paternity makes us not only literal sons and daughters of eternal parentage, but literal brothers and sisters as well. This is a fundamental teaching of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I would like to read to you several passages from the scriptures that refer to our common paternity and how our nationalities were determined. First, from Paul’s address on Mars’ Hill to the intellectuals in the marketplace at Athens. Because of their worship of an unknown god, Paul was directing his remarks to an explanation of the true God. He said:

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And [God] hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation. [Acts 17:26]

The words “hath made of one blood all nations of men” refer to Adam, the mortal father of the nations of men. The whole human race is the offspring of one man. Paul said that by divine plan the offspring has been scattered over the earth at the “times before appointed”—that is, the period fixed by God for the several families to go into the countries where he decreed they should dwell. Not only did God determine the times when they should go, but also the “bounds of their habitation,” or, in other words, the countries where they should dwell so that their posterity might carry out the Lord’s divine purposes.

The second passage of scripture is from the Book of Deuteronomy. The writer uses these words: “When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel” (Deuteronomy 32:8). This would indicate that the Lord separated the offspring of Adam into nations and at the same time provided an inheritance for the children of Jacob.

The other passage is this statement made by Peter to Cornelius and his friends:

Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. [Acts 10:34–35]

Peter had been of the opinion that only Jews were in the favor of the Lord and that Gentiles were not as acceptable. Before he had even met Cornelius, though, a vision was shown him, and he saw plainly that God was not partial. No nation or people or individual could expect to be favored above another.

From those passages of scripture we learn these basic principles: First, all men on earth are of one blood—we stem from common ancestors, Adam and Eve; second, God, our Father, in his omniscient wisdom, determined premortally the nation in which we were to live; third, nationalities are apparently circumscribed in relation to the House of Israel; fourth, our Father does not favor one people over another, but accepts all those of every nation who fear him and work righteousness.

The Church, being the kingdom of God on earth, has a mission to all nations.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. [Matthew 28:19–20]

These words from the lips of the Master know no national boundaries; they are not limited to any race or culture. One nation is not favored above another. The admonition is clear—“teach all nations.”

A present prophet has renewed this great challenge to the leaders of the Church. In addressing the Regional Representatives, he said:

The scriptures are replete with commands and promises and calls and rewards for teaching the gospel. I use the word command deliberately, for it seems to be an insistent directive from which we, singly and collectively, cannot escape.

I ask you, what did he mean when the Lord took his Twelve Apostles to the top of the Mount of Olives and said: “And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8.) These were his last words on earth before he went to his heavenly home.

What is the significance of the phrase “uttermost part of the earth”? He had already covered the area known to the apostles. Was it the people in Judea?

Or those in Samaria? Or the few millions in the Near East? Where were the “uttermost parts of the earth”? Did he mean the millions in what is now America? Did he include the hundreds of thousands, or even millions, in Greece, Italy, and around the Mediterranean, the inhabitants of central Europe? What did he mean? Or did he mean all the living people of all the world and those spirits assigned to this world to come in centuries ahead? Have we underestimated his language or its meaning? How can we be satisfied with 100,00 converts out of four billion people in the world who need the gospel?

[President Kimball continues:] *After his crucifixion the eleven apostles assembled on a mountain in Galilee, and the Savior came to them and said: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:” [He said “all nations.”]

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matthew 28:18–20.)

Again as Mark records the events after the resurrection, he upbraided those who had some doubts about his resurrection, then commanded them: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16:15.)

And Luke records the event — “That repentance and remission of sins should be preached . . . among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” (Luke 24:47.) Again, his last command. Surely there is significance in these words! There was a universal need and there must be universal coverage.

As I remember the world as Moses saw it—it was a big world. “And Moses beheld the world and the ends thereof, and all the children of men which are, and which were created.” (Moses 1:8.)

*I am constrained to believe that at that time the Lord knew the bounds of the habitations of man and the areas that would be settled and already knew his people who would possess this world. [“When the World Will Be Converted,” address to Regional Representatives, *Ensign*, October 1974, p.2.]*

Several significant developments have taken place recently that will materially assist in accomplishing the commission to teach all nations. There has been revealed the timely need for building up the First Quorum of the Seventy.

One of the revelations formulating the constitution for the affairs of the kingdom makes this provision:

The Twelve are a Traveling Presiding High Council, to officiate in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Presidency of the Church, agreeable to the institution of heaven; to build up the church, and regulate all the affairs of the same in all nations.

[The revelations then continues to define the duties of the Seventy:] *The Seventy are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve or the traveling high council, in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations. . . .*

It is the duty of the traveling high council to call upon the Seventy, when they need assistance. [D&C 107:33–34, 38.]

With the rapid growth of the Church and the heavy demands on the Twelve to provide leadership and administration and teach all nations, it becomes clear why the Lord has directed the building up of the First Quorum of the Seventy. The recent decision to do so by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve reminds us of an interesting historical parallel of an episode recorded by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. The foreign or Hellenistic Jews in Jerusalem were complaining that their widows were being neglected and not taken care of like the widows of the native Jews. When the apostles heard of this murmuring, a significant thing happened:

Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

Wherefore brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. [Acts 6:2–4]

In other words, the Twelve told the meeting that it was not reasonable for them to leave their important office of teaching the gospel to provide for the daily welfare of the widows and serve their tables. There were other good men who could look after these duties so the Twelve could continue to devote themselves to the charge of teaching the gospel to all persons. The result of the decision to call others to assist with the details was this: “And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

In the brief statement of that episode, we learn these facts: First, that the Twelve determined they were not to “serve tables” or, in other words, occupy their time in the details of administration; second, they appointed seven men, “full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom,” to look after the day-to-day needs; third, the Twelve then devoted their energies to the “ministry of the word”; fourth, the word of God increased, and the gospel was carried to greater numbers.

In December 1978, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve made a similar determination that it was no longer advisable for the Twelve to occupy their time in the details of administration of the many Church departments. They delegated seven men, designated as the presidents of the First Quorum of the Seventy, to give supervision to these details so that the Twelve could devote their full energies to the overall direction of the work, and, as

directed by the Doctrine and Covenants, “To build up the church, and regulate all the affairs of the same in all nations.”

I fully believe that in the near future we will see some of the greatest advancements in spreading the gospel to all nations that have ever taken place in this dispensation or any previous dispensation. I am sure that we will be able to look back in retrospect—as a result of the decision recently made—and record as Luke did, “And the word of God increased.”

Another significant development of recent date is the revelation on extending priesthood blessings to all worthy male members, regardless of race or color, which will assist also in accomplishing the commission to teach all nations.

Gradually nations are opening their doors, and the areas of the earth to which the gospel is being carried are increasing. With approximately 28,000 missionaries, more than at any time in the past, teaching is being increased. Missionaries are now extending the work to the west as far as Thailand, which leaves only Burma and Pakistan, to India, on the backside of the world. To the east there are missionaries as far as Iran, with only a short gap to India. They almost circle the globe.

From these revelations and developments, it should be manifestly evident to members of the Church that our Father loves all of his children. He desires all of them to embrace the gospel and come unto him. Only those are favored who obey him and keep his commandments.

As members of the Lord’s church, we need to lift our vision beyond personal prejudices. We need to discover the supreme truth that indeed our Father is no respecter of persons. Sometimes we unduly offend brothers and sisters of other nations by assigning exclusiveness to one nationality of people over another.

Let me cite, as an example of exclusiveness, the present problem in the Middle East—the conflict between the Arabs and the Jews. We do

not need to apologize nor mitigate any of the prophecies concerning the Holy Land. We believe them and declare them to be true. But this does not give us justification to dogmatically pronounce that others of our Father's children are not children of promise.

We have members of the Church in the Muslim world. These are wonderful Saints, good members of the Church. They live in Iran, Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and other countries. Sometimes they are offended by members of the Church who give the impression that we favor only the aims of the Jews. The Church has an interest in all of Abraham's descendants, and we should remember that the history of the Arabs goes back to Abraham through his son Ishmael.

Imagine a father with many sons, each having different temperaments, aptitudes, and spiritual traits. Does he love one son less than another? Perhaps the son who is least spiritually inclined has the father's attention, prayers, and pleadings more than the others. Does that mean that he loves the others less? Do you imagine our Heavenly Father loving one nationality of his offspring more exclusively than others? As members of the Church, we need to be reminded of Nephi's challenging question: "Know ye not that there are more nations than one?" (2 Nephi 29:7).

At the present time we are engaged in a project of beautifying the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem by a garden, in memory of Orson Hyde, an early apostle of the Church, and the dedicatory prayer he offered on that site. It is not because we favor one people over another. Jerusalem is sacred to the Jews, but it is also sacred to the Arabs.

A cabinet minister of Egypt once told me that if a bridge is ever built between Christianity and Islam it must be built by the Mormon Church. In making inquiry as to the reason for his statement I was impressed by his recitation of the similarities and the common bonds of brotherhood.

Both the Jews and the Arabs are children of our Father. They are both children of promise, and as a church we do not take sides. We have love for and an interest in each. The purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to bring about love, unity, and brotherhood of the highest order. Like Nephi of old, may we be able to say, "I have charity for the Jew. . . . I also have charity for the Gentiles." (2 Nephi 33:8, 9.)

To our friends of Judah, we say: We are your brethren of the house of Joseph—we feel close relationship to you. We are messengers of the true covenant and bear a message that God has spoken in this day and time.

To our kinsmen of Abraham, we say: We are your brethren—we look upon no nation or nationality as second-class citizens. We invite all men to investigate our message and to receive our fellowship.

To our brothers and sisters of all nationalities: We bear solemn witness and testify that God has spoken in our day and time, that heavenly messengers have been sent, that God has revealed his mind and will to a prophet, Joseph Smith. And, as Andrew beckoned his brother, Simon Peter, to come and hear the Messiah, we say to one and all: "Come and see" (see John 1:35–42).

As our Father loves all his children, we must love all people—of every race, culture, and nationality—and teach them the principles of the gospel that they might embrace it and come to a knowledge of the divinity of the Savior. Only they are favored who keep his commandments.

I know that God is our eternal Heavenly Father, and that his son, Jesus Christ, is the Savior of the world. We will receive blessings and find exaltation by following him, keeping his commandments, having love for and teaching all nations. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.