

All Hell Is Moved

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Thank you very much, President Oaks. One of the joys of my life has been the association in recent years with President Oaks. He is, in my opinion, the outstanding university president in America today. He could preside over other universities and render a great service, but I am glad he is here. I am grateful for this beautiful music that has been so well sung, for those anthems of praise, and for the prayer offered in each of our behalves.

Because President Oaks has been courteous to me many times, I have had this signal honor before; but, as he pointed out, for the first time I feel as though I belong and am one of you. And as a father and an adopted alumnus of this University, may I take this opportunity to thank the faculty of Brigham Young University who have taught and are now teaching so well my four children and two children acquired through marriage. It is a great blessing to have a faculty of such fine men and women and to feel as a father that one's children are being so well taught. With us today also is our first grandchild, Peter, a grandson seven months old, who is checking the campus out. Hopefully he will come here too, someday, unless today's devotional speaker proves too depressing.

The theme of my address comes from a prophecy in President George Q. Cannon's speech given in the Tabernacle in May of 1866. President Cannon spoke of the generations that had passed before the restoration of the gospel during which the adversary was indifferent and unconcerned with regard to the fractious religious movements among mankind which were not based upon the fulness of truth. However, President Cannon observed that the movement of the Holy Priesthood of God and the Church were restored, "then all hell is moved." He catalogued the forms of resistance that can be expected when "all hell is moved."

President Cannon, who knew that the adversary regards this telestial turf as his own, said that Satan will vigorously resist all rezoning efforts because this is his world. President Cannon further observed that the Saints—meaning you and I—must not make the mistake of assuming the existence of any

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truce between the forces of Satan and God. To believe so, said President Cannon, is “a very great delusion, and a very common one.”

President Cannon then warned that the forms of resistance to righteousness will strike us “with wonder and astonishment.” This, he said, would occur because “the war” which was waged in heaven has been transferred to the earth,” and that this conflict, he said, “will [come to] occupy the thoughts and minds of all the inhabitants of the earth” (*Journal of Discourses* 11:227–29). Brothers and sisters, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will be at the epicenter of all that.

On the sixth of April, 1845, the Twelve Apostles issued a proclamation which included these words:

As this work progresses in its onward course, and becomes more and more an object of political and religious interest and excitement, no king, ruler, or subject, no community or individual, will stand neutral. All will at length be influenced by one spirit or the other; and will take sides either for or against the kingdom of God. (Messages of the First Presidency, p. 257)

Such audacity! Except for apostles. Such presumptuousness! Except for prophets. That prophecy is underway, and it is about that that I wish to speak today.

I stress that I come neither as an alarmist nor as a pessimist, but as one who seeks in his gentle way to remind us of this reality lest we be struck “with wonder and astonishment” and become dismayed and dislocated by difficulties that emerge when “all hell is moved,” because the restored kingdom is really rolling now. We may never become accustomed to untrue and unjust criticism of us but we ought not to be immobilized by it. Neither should we be surprised at the proximity of such protagonists and the falsity and the fury of their pronouncements. President Joseph F. Smith said, “there are those—and they abound largely in

our midst—who will shut their eyes to every virtue and to every good thing connected with this latter-day work, and will proud out floods of falsehood and misrepresentation against the people of God.” President Smith, who endured so much of that proximate persecution, did what we must also do. He said of such detractors, “I forgive them for this. I leave them in the hands of the just Judge” (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 337).

President Brigham Young observed that it would be at the very time when the Church was reaching out to all the nations of the world, when it was prospering and growing, that there would be in proportion to the spread of the gospel a rise in the power of Satan. We are in that very period of time now, too. The obscurity of the Church has given way to visibility. You who have entered here to learn and who go forth to serve mankind—wafted as you will be from place to place on this planet—are also builders of the kingdom. You must be especially aware of the confluence of events that I am describing. You must still go forth, for you have been sent to this planet at precisely this time because you could cope with the challenges being described.

In the beginning of the Restoration, Joseph Smith quickly became an object of scorn and ridicule. The reaction to him, except by Satan’s scale, was all out of proportion. Joseph reflected upon this when he observed:

How very strange it was that an obscure boy . . . should be thought a character of sufficient importance to attract the attention of the great ones of the most popular sects of the day, and in a manner to create in them a spirit of the most bitter persecution and reviling.

But as the Prophet observed, “strange or not, so it was “ (Joseph Smith 2:23). As with that individual, so with God’s institution. When the Saints are spotlighted, it will not always be for

us to take curtsies and bows; sometimes the spotlights will be searchlights.

Note, brothers and sisters, that it is the validity which draws the fire of the adversary. Combine validity and visibility, as in our time, and there is even more reaction. The adversary would scarcely pay any attention to a still numerically obscure Church unless he recognized what is underway for just what it is. Jesus declared who he was, and many disbelieved him, but the unclean spirit in Capernaum recognized him and said: "I know thee who thou art" (Mark 1:24). Lucifer and his legions are alert; they know Christ's church is what it is. The adversary is aware.

It should not surprise us, therefore, that as the Church becomes larger and more visible we will sail our rougher waters, and that there will be more "struggling seamen" anxious to be saved and to come on board. Indeed, there are reasons to believe—as the contrasts between the kingdom and the ways of the world become sharper, the choices more obvious, and the issues more irrepressible—that this condition will, in fact, help those who otherwise might delay making a choice or who might make a wrong choice if the issues remained obscured.

It should not puzzle us, if we have studied scriptural history carefully—including what happened to the Savior—that defectors often cause more difficulty than disinterested disbelievers. It should not surprise us either, as Peter observed of those drawn away by false accusers, that it will be they and their followers "by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (2 Peter 2:2).

There are those who chronically misunderstand the Church because they are busy trying to explain the Church from the outside. They are so busy believing what they want to believe about the Church that they will not take the time to learn what they need to learn about the Church. They prefer any explanation to the real explanation. Some prefer to believe the worst

rather than to know the truth. Still others are afraid to part the smokescreen of allegations for fear of what they will see. Yet one cannot see the Louvre by remaining in its lobby. One cannot understand the Church by remaining outside. A non-believing but fair critic of the Church, a friend of mine, once said that the Book of Mormon was the only book some critics felt they did not need to read before reviewing it.

Some dismiss the Church out of hand for not being trendy in its theology and for being authoritarian. To such I say, better a true theocracy with a little democracy than a democracy without any theology. Yes, the kingdom of God is a kingdom; there is no "one man, one vote" rule between its King and its citizens.

Some insist upon studying the Church only through the eyes of its defectors—like interviewing Judas to understand Jesus. Defectors always tell us more about themselves than about that from which they have departed.

Some others patiently feed their pet peeve about the Church without realizing that such a pet will not only bite the hands of him who feeds it, but it will swallow his whole soul. Of course we are a very imperfect people! Remember, however, that while it is possible to have an imperfect people possessed of perfect doctrines (indeed, such is necessary to change their imperfections), you will never, never see the reverse: a perfect people with imperfect doctrines. The more people there are who bear false witness concerning a true movement, the greater the need for us to be true witnesses of the Savior and his way of life. We can be noble even when we are being treated ignobly. We not only can be, but we must be.

It was Peter who warned us about the central cause of so much of this criticism. He said that the days would come when people would deny the Lord who "bought them" (2 Peter 2:1). That scripture of course, is a direct reference to the atonement of Jesus Christ when he ransomed and purchased us,

making the resurrection a reality for all. To deny the reality and the validity of his atonement and his resurrection, and therefore the resurrection of mankind, is to deny the very Lord. But such is the case with so much of the existential Christianity. Diluted Christianity is not Christianity, it is a feeble attempt to have Christianity without Christ, for it denies the central service of Jesus' life—the Atonement. Those who call themselves Christians but deny the divinity of Jesus cannot seem to tolerate those of us who accept and proclaim the divinity of Christ. No one, brothers and sisters, would pay us much heed if we were merely nonsmoking, nondrinking humanists. Without acknowledging the reality of the Resurrection and the Atonement, believing in the ministry of Jesus would mean slumping into the very Saduceeism which Jesus himself denounced.

Isn't it interesting that the Bible, marvelous and wonderful as it is, has not by itself been able to develop and sustain in so many individuals a deep, clear-cut, lasting, and unvarying commitment to the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ? Paul, who was witness to the resurrected Jesus, warned of such a crippled Christianity when he said: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19). If Jesus had not rescued us from death, there would be ultimate misery. If his ministry is viewed as merely mortal, it is robbed of its real relevance. In the midst of such doctrinal disarray stands the church of Jesus Christ, proclaiming the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth. No wonder there is such a sharp reaction from the forces of him who sought the Saviorship for himself.

Jude warned of insidious disbelievers. He said,

For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. [Jude 4]

Clearly, the Book of Mormon was needed as an added witness in these, the decades of deep doubt. Clearly, the theophany at Palmyra puts to rout all the chatter about the historicity of Jesus; it ended all the theological fuzziness about the nature of the Godhead.

The Lord said of the scriptures and the words of his prophets something that is so fundamental about the ecology of belief. He said, "He that will not believe my words will not believe me—that I am" (Ether 4:12). Thus the Book of Mormon came like a theological thunderbolt on the stage of history—to be a second witness for the divinity of Jesus Christ "to the *convincing* of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ" (Title page, Book of Mormon; italics added). Note the word "convincing." The Bible often initiates and helps to sustain faith in Jesus, but the Book of Mormon is the *convincer* and the *clarifier*. Isn't it ironical in this regard that there are some who still wonder if members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are Christians? Was General Douglas MacArthur a West-Pointer? Was Winston Churchill an Englishman?

We are Christ's kingdom builders. Those who build the heavenly kingdom have always made nervous the people who are busy building worldly kingdoms. The inspired translation of the Bible gives us a rendition of Matthew, chapter 6, verse 33, with fourteen additional words that give us a great clue to our role as kingdom-builders. What we read in the King James Version is a helpful and motivating, but still puzzling, verse which says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." I shall now read to you that verse (Matthew 6:33; italics added) as it appears in the inspired translation of Joseph Smith: "Wherefore, seek not the things of this world; but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish this righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." This is but one example of how plain and precious things are

missing from the King James translation, marvelous though it is, an inspired book which has survived so much and yet with such strength and beauty.

Christians who worship a resurrected Jesus Christ (a Jesus who not only lived but lives) and who believe in the sermon at Capernaum and the sermon on the Mount are kingdom-builders. When such individuals, clothed in the purple of the holy priesthood, preach Christ crucified *and* Christ resurrected, and when such people become increasingly effective in kingdom-building, indeed “all hell is moved.”

It would be so much safer to float with the ebbing theological tides as do so many today who simply regard Jesus as a Galilean Gandhi or as a Socrates who strode in Samaria. But we know Jesus to be divine, the literal Son of the Father. We know that he established his church, and that it is not simply a church built upon doctrinal debris from other dispensations or fragments of the faith from another age. It is a church built upon the fulness of his gospel; it bears his name and is his kingdom in these latter days, a kingdom to which the good men and women of all nations, cultures, and races will be drawn. Knowing this, we are like Joseph Smith—we speak the truth because we can do no other.

How can we expect to be a part of such momentous developments as these and yet expect to pass unnoticed so far as the people of the world are concerned? Surely we will not pass unnoticed in our righteous endeavors so far as the adversary is concerned. In 1820 he noticed an obscure teenage lad going into an obscure grove to pray—of all the prayers offered that day, why bother that boy? But it was sufficiently clear to Satan what was about to transpire. Is it any wonder that those who resist the building of the latter-day kingdom will, from time to time (as described in Ether, chapter 8, or the 38th section of the Doctrine and Covenants), act in “combinations” against

the kingdom? Everything in the arsenal of the adversary will eventually be used.

Now, having been briefly descriptive, let me for these closing moments be prescriptive. Let us not be dismayed if the critics of the kingdom exploit our personal errors and work on our individual weaknesses and pounce upon our failures. Let us not forget that the meridian-day saints also knew what it was like when “all hell is moved.”

Let us minimize our personal errors which enemies could exploit. Let us conquer the weaknesses which critics could work upon. Let us be harmless, so that we go not forth on ego excursions that damage others, for we are people-builders as well as kingdom-builders. Let our citizenship be spirited but always appropriate and befitting who we are. Let us approach power and authority as the Lord prescribed in the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants. Let us be articulate, for while our defense of the kingdom may not stir all hearers, the absence of thoughtful response may cause fledglings among the faithful to falter. What we assert may not be accepted, but unasserted convictions soon become deserted convictions.

The reactions to us will vary: there will be the almost Agrippas, the puzzled Pilates, the timid Van Burens, and the stout Colonel Kanes, and, of course, there will be some scorn and some rage. But deep within the rage and the scorn, if one listens closely, are the sounds of profound pain, hushed hope, and of doubt beginning to doubt itself. Sometimes the chastening that comes to us individually is at least partially deserved. We would not really want a loving Father to stop teaching us and correcting us. Other times the chastening will be undeserved; but, said the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord will “have a tried people,” and “He would purge them as gold” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 135).

Let your education be emancipating in all the correct ways, but also in another very subtle

way, a way clearly related to your role in the tempestuous times before you. I refer to the need to understand the principle of obedience, which has fallen on hard times; obedience is low on the world's scale of values. There are causes for this, of course. Some have done terribly wrong things in obedience to unjust leaders. Some have engaged in senseless subordination to bad causes, becoming mere satellites in mindless orbits. Satan always pretzelizes principles in order to increase human misery.

But obedience is so essential for the gospel journey; it must be rescued from the careless conclusions reached by sloppy intellects. The tests of obedience are always "to whom?" and "to what?" Obedience is not blind faith but following the glimpses we get when seeing with the eye of faith. Obedience is not shrinking from adventure and agency; it is an opening up. Obedience is not being glad to have someone else relieve us of our responsibility. Obedience to correct principles is leaping free of constraints such as fear and ignorance. Obedience will push us into adventures and experiences that free us both from prejudice toward certain people and from prejudice toward certain principles.

Obedience springs from intellectual integrity in that it causes us to be honest and to own up to the validity of precious experiences. Studied closely, the episode involving Adam and his sacrifice will suggest to us that the quality of Adam's previous experiences with the Lord (and probably with angels) was so reliable that when he was asked why he sacrificed, he could reply, "I know not, save the Lord commanded me" (Moses 5:6). For Adam to have excluded his previous experiences from his decision to be obedient would have been dishonest.

Obedience on our part can bring us face to face with new challenges which we need but do not want, challenges from which we may even be running away. Obedience helps us to pioneer beyond the past. Logic may look and

tell us that the mountains ahead of us are stern Sierras, but obedience will cause us to press forward anyway over what finally prove to be simply rolling hills.

Therefore, practice emancipating obedience! Do not let your moods maul your faith. Do not allow the absence of social life and dates to color your attitude toward your rendezvous with the resurrection. Do not let a bad day cause you to think that life is bad. Do not let low self-esteem discount your high blessings. In short, do not homogenize your hopes by mixing and treating them as if all hopes and aspirations are equal. They are not. The hope for a resurrection is guaranteed unconditionally by the atonement of the Savior. The hope for a good grade on an exam is quite obviously a hope of a different order; it is of much less significance and it is by no means guaranteed.

Our transitory disappointments are real, but the missing letter from home is not really comparable to the delivered message from heaven, the good news of the gospel. Today's unmet hunger for a few more friends must not be allowed to obscure the marvelous reality of the forever friendship of Jesus for each of us. Do not let uncertainty about how others seem to feel about you this week get in the way of how God has always felt about you.

Our intertwining insecurities, the hunger for peer reassurance, and the tendency to be carried on the tides of today's troubles and disappointments will diminish as we mature. As our understanding of the gospel deepens, it becomes ever more clear that proximate problems need not, and must not, undercut ultimate realities. Thus, as we confront problems which we might shiveringly sidestep, if we could, let us realize, as one poet did, that "sometimes the only way to go is through." We go on that journey with justified hopes to help our hunger and with realities to reassure us. And, in the midst of our transitory troubles, we have the knowledge that he is near at hand, and within us there is even the sense that in the

dim past we agreed to all this and that now we must perform on that pledge.

I salute you as kingdom-builders and as a generation of destiny. A whole nation can be leavened by a righteous rising generation—or, as we lamentably read of another group of young adults; “thus . . . the Lamanites . . . began to decrease as to their faith and righteousness, because of the wickedness of the rising generation” (3 Nephi 1:30). You bright spirits could not have chosen a better time to be born, with more neighbors waiting and needing to be shown the gospel. I know you have been properly placed because God did it.

How can we remain silent when we know that there will come a time, as the scriptures have foretold, when there will be a great sign in heaven and that all flesh shall see Christ together (See D&C 88:93, D&C 101:23)? No wonder we rejoice! No wonder we reach out! No wonder we stand all amazed whenever the light of the everlasting gospel lights up a soul, denoting the dawn of a new discipleship. Hopefully we will never cease to thrill, as did Ammon, when “the light of everlasting life was lit up” in the soul of King Lamoni (Alma 19:6). Meanwhile, it is important that we be as righteous as we can be, so that no one is deflected from discipleship because of us and our errors.

As the veil of unbelief thickens around the globe, nothing can rend “the dark veil of unbelief” (Alma 19:6) that is not sharp, piercing, bright, and true. Dull disciples will not light the way nor draw people to the kingdom. The philosophies of the world cannot do it, for so far as having some saving and consequential core to them, such philosophies are like peeling an onion. Perhaps that is why we cry when we peel onions. The truths we seek to live and to share are sweet, reassuring, and redeeming. But they are also tough truths; they keep us up against things that really matter. And central to all of these truths is the declaration of the Savior himself in which he said, “Behold, . . .

I am the light, and the life, and the truth of the world” (Ether 4:12). These are not the words of some Buddha born in Bethlehem; these are the words of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

We say (without tying it to any sense of personal vindication) what Paul said: that the time will come “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10–11).

We know, as a Book of Mormon prophet said, that

At the last day, when all men shall stand to be judged of him, then shall they confess that he is God; then shall they confess, who live without God in the world, that the judgment of an everlasting punishment is just upon them; and they shall quake, and tremble, and shrink beneath the glance of his all-searching eye. [Mosiah 27:31]

Yea, even those “who live without God in the world” will also one day kneel in confession of Christ, acknowledging not only the reality of God in the world but also his justice and his love.

The gift of immortality to all mankind through the reality of the Resurrection is so powerful a promise that our rejoicing in these great and generous gifts should drown out any sorrow, assuage any grief, conquer any mood, dissolve any despair, and tame any tragedy. Those who now see life as pointless will one day point with adoration to the performance of the Man of Galilee in those crowded moments of time known as Gethsemane and Calvary. Those who presently say life is meaningless will yet applaud the Atonement which saves us from meaninglessness. Christ’s victory over death ended the human predicaments, and from these too we may be rescued by following the teachings of him who rescued us from general extinction.

Our “brightness of hope,” therefore, means that at funerals our tears are genuine, but not

because of termination—rather because of interruption. Though just as wet, our tears are not of despair but are of appreciation and anticipation. Yes, for disciples, the closing of a grave is but the closing of a door which later will be flung open with rejoicing.

We say, humbly but firmly that it is the garden tomb—not life—that is empty.

That fiery sphere we call the sun, which guides our solar system, will one day burn out, but it provides us with a useful analogy. We may cover our eyes or turn from its light, but its light is still there. We may see it through glass darkly, but it glows on just as brightly. For a few hours we call night it seems to be gone, but it is still shiningly there and will reappear on the morrow. Storms may darken the sky at noonday, but the sun is still there and will soon break through.

So it is with the Son of God, about whom this choir has sung so well today. We may turn from him, but he is still there. We may feel that he is hidden from us because of the cloud cover of our concerns, but he is still close to us. We—not he—let something come between us, but no lasting eclipse need ensue. Our provincialism cannot withstand his universalism. Our disregard of him is no match for his love of us. Yes, Jesus of Nazareth lived! He lives now! He guides his Church!

True, all hell may be moved, but as it moves, the devil's kingdom will be irrevocably shaken, so that many can be shaken loose from his grasp. It is the kingdom of heaven that is coming—triumphant, true, and everlasting! God grant that we may each be faithful to all the assignments given to us during our pre-mortal preparation for these dramatic days, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.