

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" (D&C 68:6). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

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## President Gordon B. Hinckley

Wasn't that absolutely magnificent? Thank you, Liriel Domiciano and the choir. What a great declaration of faith—"I know that my Redeemer lives." Thank you again for that stirring and wonderful music.

May I first say to all the Church, and to others, thank you for your great kindness to Sister Hinckley and me. You have been and are so gracious and generous. We are touched by all you do for us. If all the world were treated as we are treated, what a different world it would be. We would care for one another in the Spirit of the Master, who reached out to comfort and heal.

### These are perilous times

Now, my brothers and sisters, President Packer has spoken to you as a grandfather. I should like to pick up a thread from the tapestry he has woven. I too am now an old man, older even than he, if you can imagine that. I have been around for a long time, I have traveled far, and I have seen much of this world. In hours of quiet reflection, I wonder why there is so much of trouble and suffering almost everywhere. Our times are fraught with peril. We hear frequently quoted the words of Paul to Timothy: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come" (2 Timothy 3:1). He then goes on to describe the conditions that will prevail. I think it is plainly evident that these latter days are indeed perilous times that fit the conditions that Paul described (see 2 Timothy 3:2–7).

But peril is not a new condition for the human family. Revelation tells us that "there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

"And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:7–9).

What a perilous time that must have been. The Almighty Himself was pitted against the son of the morning. We were there while that was going on. That must have been a desperately difficult struggle, with a grand, triumphal victory.

Concerning those desperate times, the Lord spoke to Job out of the whirlwind and said: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? . . . When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4, 7).

Why were we then happy? I think it was because good had triumphed over evil and the whole human family was on the Lord's side. We had turned our backs on the adversary and aligned ourselves with the forces of God, and those forces were victorious.

But having made that decision, why should we have to make it again and again after our birth into mortality?

I cannot understand why so many have betrayed in life the decision they once made when the great war occurred in heaven.

### War between good and evil has continued

But it is evident that the contest between good and evil, which began with that war, has never ended. It has gone on, and on, and on to the present.

I think our Father must weep because so many of His children through the ages have exercised the agency He gave them and have chosen to walk the road of evil rather than good.

Evil was manifest early in this world when Cain slew Abel. It increased until in the days of Noah, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

"And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (Genesis 6:5–6).

He commanded Noah to build an ark "wherein few, that is, eight souls" would be saved (1 Peter 3:20).

The earth was cleansed. The floods receded. Righteousness was again established. But it was not long until the family of humanity, so very many of them, returned to the old ways of disobedience. The inhabitants of the cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, are examples of the depravity to which men sank. And "God [utterly] destroyed the cities of the plain" in a summary and final desolation (Genesis 19:29).

Isaiah thundered: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness" (Isaiah 59:2–3).

It was so with the other prophets of the Old Testament. The burden of their message was a denunciation of wickedness. And the peril of those times was not peculiar to the Old World. The Book of Mormon documents that in the Western

Hemisphere the armies of the Jaredites fought to the death. The Nephites and the Lamanites also fought until thousands had died and Moroni was forced to wander alone for the safety of his own life (see Moroni 1:3). His great and final plea, directed toward those of our day, was a call to righteousness:

"And again I would exhort you that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing" (Moroni 10:30).

### Apostasy after the Savior's death

When the Savior walked the earth, He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38), but He also denounced the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, speaking of them as "whited sepulchres" (see Matthew 23:27). He lashed out at the money changers in the temple, saying, "My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Luke 19:46). This too was a time of great peril. Palestine was part of the Roman Empire, which, in its governance, was ironfisted, oppressive, and clouded over with evil.

Paul's letters cried out for strength among the followers of Christ, lest they fall into the ways of the wicked one. But a spirit of apostasy ultimately prevailed.

Ignorance and evil enveloped the world, resulting in what is known as the Dark Ages. Isaiah predicted, "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people" (Isaiah 60:2). For centuries, disease was rampant and poverty reigned. The Black Death killed some 50 million people during the 14th century. Was not this a season of terrible peril? I wonder how humanity survived.

But somehow, in that long season of darkness a candle was lighted. The age of Renaissance brought with it a flowering of learning, art, and science. There came a movement of bold and courageous men

and women who looked heavenward in acknowledgment of God and His divine Son. We speak of it as the Reformation.

### **The dawning of a brighter day**

And then, after many generations had walked the earth—so many of them in conflict, hatred, darkness, and evil—there arrived the great, new day of the Restoration. This glorious gospel was ushered in with the appearance of the Father and the Son to the boy Joseph. The dawn of the dispensation of the fulness of times rose upon the world. All of the good, the beautiful, the divine of all previous dispensations was restored in this most remarkable season.

But there was also evil. And one manifestation of that evil was persecution. There was hatred. There were drivings and forced marches in the time of winter.

It was as Charles Dickens described in the opening lines of his *A Tale of Two Cities*: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, . . . it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.”

Notwithstanding the great evil of these times, what a glorious season it has been and now is. A new day has come in the work of the Almighty. That work has grown and strengthened and moved across the earth. It has now touched for good the lives of millions, and this is only the beginning.

This great dawning has also resulted in a tremendous outpouring of secular knowledge upon the world.

Think of the increased longevity of life. Think of the wonders of modern medicine. I stand amazed. Think of the flowering of education. Think of the miraculous advances in travel and communication. Man’s ingenuity knows no end when the God of heaven inspires and pours out light and knowledge.

There is still so much of conflict in the world. There is terrible poverty, disease, and hatred. Man is still brutal in his inhumanity to man. Yet there is this glorious dawn. The “Sun of righteousness” has come “with healing in his wings” (Malachi 4:2). God and His Beloved Son have revealed Themselves. We know Them. We worship Them “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). We love Them. We honor Them and seek to do Their will.

The keys of the everlasting priesthood have turned the locks of the prisons of the past.

The morning breaks, the shadows flee;  
Lo, Zion’s standard is unfurled!  
The dawning of a brighter day, . . .  
Majestic rises on the world.

[“The Morning Breaks,” *Hymns*, no. 1]

Perilous times? Yes. These are perilous times. But the human race has lived in peril from the time before the earth was created. Somehow, through all of the darkness, there has been a faint but beautiful light. And now with added luster it shines upon the world. It carries with it God’s plan of happiness for His children. It carries with it the great and unfathomable wonders of the Atonement of the Redeemer.

How grateful we are to the God of heaven for His beneficent care of His children in providing for them, through all the perils of eternity, the opportunity of salvation and the blessing of exaltation in His kingdom, if only they will live in righteousness.

### **We have a great responsibility**

And, my brothers and sisters, this places upon each of us a grand and consuming responsibility. President Wilford Woodruff said in 1894:

“The Almighty is with this people. We shall have all the revelations that we

will need, if we will do our duty and obey the commandments of God. . . . While I . . . live I want to do my duty. I want the Latter-day Saints to do their duty. Here is the Holy Priesthood. . . . Their responsibility is great and mighty. The eyes of God and all the holy prophets are watching us. This is the great dispensation that has been spoken of ever since the world began. We are gathered together . . . by the power and commandment of God. We are doing the work of God. . . . Let us fill our mission” (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [1965–75], 3:258).

This is our great and demanding challenge, my brothers and sisters. This is the choice we must constantly make, just as generations before us have had to choose. We must ask ourselves:

Who’s on the Lord’s side? Who?  
 Now is the time to show.  
 We ask it fearlessly:  
 Who’s on the Lord’s side? Who?  
 [“Who’s on the Lord’s Side?” *Hymns*,  
 no. 260]

Do we really comprehend, do we understand the tremendous significance of that which we have? This is the summation of the generations of man, the concluding chapter in the entire panorama of the human experience.

### **Live as true followers of Christ**

But this does not put us in a position of superiority. Rather, it should humble us. It places upon us an unforgiving responsibility to reach out with concern for all others in the Spirit of the Master, who taught, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as

thyself” (Matthew 19:19). We must cast out self-righteousness and rise above petty self-interest.

We must do all that is required in moving forward the work of the Lord in building His kingdom in the earth. We can never compromise the doctrine which has come through revelation, but we can live and work with others, respecting their beliefs and admiring their virtues, joining hands in opposition to the sophistries, the quarrels, the hatred—those perils which have been with man from the beginning.

Without surrendering any element of our doctrine, we can be neighborly, we can be helpful, we can be kind and generous.

We of this generation are the end harvest of all that has gone before. It is not enough to simply be known as a member of this Church. A solemn obligation rests upon us. Let us face it and work at it.

We must live as true followers of the Christ, with charity toward all, returning good for evil, teaching by example the ways of the Lord, and accomplishing the vast service He has outlined for us.

May we live worthy of the glorious endowment of light and understanding and eternal truth which has come to us through all the perils of the past. Somehow, among all who have walked the earth, we have been brought forth in this unique and remarkable season. Be grateful, and above all be faithful. This is my humble prayer, as I bear witness of the truth of this work, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “Faith in Every Footstep.”

Elder James M. Dunn offered the benediction.

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