
The choir sang “In Hymns of Praise.”
Elder Marlin K. Jensen offered the
invocation.
The choir sang “O Divine Redeemer.”

President Uchtdorf

Thank you, Tabernacle Choir.
We will now be pleased to hear from
Elders Jeffrey R. Holland and Quentin L.
Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apos-
tles. Following Elder Cook’s remarks, we
will hear from Elder Brent H. Nielson of
the Seventy.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Troubles of the heart and soul

Prophecies regarding the last days of-
ten refer to large-scale calamities such as
earthquakes or famines or floods. These
in turn may be linked to widespread eco-
nomic or political upheavals of one kind
or another.

But there is one kind of latter-day de-
struction that has always sounded to me
more personal than public, more individ-
ual than collective—a warning, perhaps
more applicable inside the Church than
outside it. The Savior warned that in the
last days even those of the covenant, the
very elect, could be deceived by the enemy
of truth.¹ If we think of this as a form of
spiritual destruction, it may cast light on
another latter-day prophecy. Think of the
heart as the figurative center of our faith,
the poetic location of our loyalties and our
values; then consider Jesus’s declaration
that in the last days “men’s hearts [shall
fail] them.”²

The encouraging thing, of course, is
that our Father in Heaven knows all of
these latter-day dangers, these troubles of
the heart and soul, and has given counsel
and protections regarding them.

Lehi’s dream

In light of that, it has always been sig-
nificant to me that the Book of Mormon,
one of the Lord’s powerful keystones³ in

this counteroffensive against latter-day
ills, begins with a great parable of life, an
extended allegory of hope versus fear, of
light versus darkness, of salvation versus
destruction—an allegory of which Sister
Ann M. Dibb spoke so movingly this
morning.

In Lehi’s dream an already difficult
journey gets more difficult when a mist
of darkness arises, obscuring any view of
the safe but narrow path his family and
others are to follow. It is imperative to
note that this mist of darkness descends
on *all* the travelers—the faithful and the
determined ones (the elect, we might even
say) as well as the weaker and ungrounded
ones. The principal point of the story is
that the successful travelers resist all dis-
tractions, including the lure of forbidden
paths and jeering taunts from the vain
and proud who have taken those paths.
The record says that the protected “did
press their way forward, continually [and,
I might add, tenaciously] holding fast” to a
rod of iron that runs unflinchingly along the
course of the true path.⁴ However dark the
night *or* the day, the rod marks the way of
that solitary, redeeming trail.

“I beheld,” Nephi says later, “that the
rod of iron . . . was the word of God, [lead-
ing] . . . to the tree of life; . . . a represen-
tation of the love of God.” Viewing this
manifestation of God’s love, Nephi goes
on to say:

“I looked and beheld the Redeemer of the world, . . . [who] went forth ministering unto the people. . . .

“. . . And I beheld multitudes of people who were sick, and who were afflicted with all manner of diseases, and with devils and unclean spirits; . . . and they were healed by the power of the Lamb of God; and the devils and the unclean spirits were cast out.”⁵

Love. Healing. Help. Hope. The power of Christ to counter all troubles in all times—including the end of times. That is the safe harbor God wants for us in personal or public days of despair. That is the message with which the Book of Mormon begins, and that is the message with which it ends, calling all to “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him.”⁶ That phrase—taken from Moroni’s final lines of testimony, written 1,000 years after Lehi’s vision—is a dying man’s testimony of the only true way.

Testimony of Joseph and Hyrum Smith

May I refer to a modern “last days” testimony? When Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum started for Carthage to face what they knew would be an imminent martyrdom, Hyrum read these words to comfort the heart of his brother:

“Thou hast been faithful; wherefore, . . . thou shalt be made strong, even unto the sitting down in the place which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father.

“And now I, Moroni, bid farewell . . . until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ.”⁷

A few short verses from the 12th chapter of Ether in the Book of Mormon. Before closing the book, Hyrum turned down the corner of the page from which he had read, marking it as part of the everlasting testimony for which these two brothers were about to die. I hold in my hand that book, the very copy from which Hyrum read, the same corner of the page turned down, still visible. Later, when actually incarcerated in the jail, Joseph the Prophet

turned to the guards who held him captive and bore a powerful testimony of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon.⁸ Shortly thereafter pistol and ball would take the lives of these two testators.

As one of a thousand elements of my own testimony of the divinity of the Book of Mormon, I submit this as yet one more evidence of its truthfulness. In this their greatest—and last—hour of need, I ask you: would these men blaspheme before God by continuing to fix their lives, their honor, and their own search for eternal salvation on a book (and by implication a church and a ministry) they had fictitiously created out of whole cloth?

Never mind that their wives are about to be widows and their children fatherless. Never mind that their little band of followers will yet be “houseless, friendless, and homeless” and that their children will leave footprints of blood across frozen rivers and an untamed prairie floor.⁹ Never mind that legions will die and other legions live declaring in the four quarters of this earth that they know the Book of Mormon and the Church which espouses it to be true. Disregard all of that, and tell me whether in this hour of death these two men would enter the presence of their Eternal Judge quoting from and finding solace in a book which, if *not* the very word of God, would brand them as imposters and charlatans until the end of time? *They would not do that!* They were willing to die rather than deny the divine origin and the eternal truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.

Divinity of the Book of Mormon

For 179 years this book has been examined and attacked, denied and deconstructed, targeted and torn apart like perhaps no other book in modern religious history—perhaps like no other book in *any* religious history. And still it stands. Failed theories about its origins have been born and parroted and have died—from Ethan Smith to Solomon Spaulding to deranged

paranoid to cunning genius. None of these frankly pathetic answers for this book has ever withstood examination because *there is no other answer* than the one Joseph gave as its young, unlearned translator. In this I stand with my own great-grandfather, who said simply enough, “No wicked man could write such a book as this; and no good man would write it, unless it were true and he were commanded of God to do so.”¹⁰

I testify that one cannot come to full faith in this latter-day work—and thereby find the fullest measure of peace and comfort in these, our times—until he or she embraces the divinity of the Book of Mormon and the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it testifies. If *anyone* is foolish enough or misled enough to reject 531 pages of a heretofore unknown text teeming with literary and Semitic complexity without honestly attempting to account for the origin of those pages—especially without accounting for their powerful witness of Jesus Christ and the profound spiritual impact that witness has had on what is now tens of millions of readers—if that is the case, then such a person, elect or otherwise, has been deceived; and if he or she leaves this Church, it must be done by crawling over or under or around the Book of Mormon to make that exit. In that sense the book is what Christ Himself was said to be: “a stone of stumbling, . . . a rock of offence,”¹¹ a barrier in the path of one who wishes not to believe in this work. Witnesses, even witnesses who were for a time hostile to Joseph, testified to their death that they had seen an angel and had handled the plates. “They have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man,” they declared. “Wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true.”¹²

A witness of the Book of Mormon

Now, I did not sail with the brother of Jared in crossing an ocean, settling in a new world. I did not hear King Benjamin

speak his angelically delivered sermon. I did not proselyte with Alma and Amulek nor witness the fiery death of innocent believers. I was not among the Nephite crowd who touched the wounds of the resurrected Lord, nor did I weep with Mormon and Moroni over the destruction of an entire civilization. But my testimony of this record and the peace it brings to the human heart is as binding and unequivocal as was theirs. Like them, “[I] give [my name] unto the world, to witness unto the world that which [I] *have seen*.” And like them, “[I] lie not, God bearing witness of it.”¹³

I ask that my testimony of the Book of Mormon and all that it implies, given today under my own oath and office, be recorded by men on earth and angels in heaven. I hope I have a few years left in my “last days,” but whether I do or do not, I want it absolutely clear when I stand before the judgment bar of God that I declared to the world, in the most straightforward language I could summon, that the Book of Mormon is true, that it came forth the way Joseph said it came forth and was given to bring happiness and hope to the faithful in the travail of the latter days.

My witness echoes that of Nephi, who wrote part of the book in *his* “last days”:

“Hearken unto these words and believe in Christ; and if ye believe not in these words believe in Christ. *And if ye shall believe in Christ ye will believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ, . . . and they teach all men that they should do good.*

“And if they are not the words of Christ, judge ye—for Christ will show unto you, with power and great glory, that they are his words, *at the last day.*”¹⁴

Brothers and sisters, God always provides safety for the soul, and with the Book of Mormon, He has again done that in our time. Remember this declaration by Jesus Himself: “Whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived”¹⁵—and in the last days neither your heart nor your faith

will fail you. Of this I earnestly testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Matthew 24:24; see also Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22.
2. Luke 21:26.
3. See *History of the Church*, 4:461.
4. 1 Nephi 8:30.
5. 1 Nephi 11:25, 27–28, 31.
6. Moroni 10:32.
7. Ether 12:37–38; see also Doctrine and Covenants 135:5.

8. See *History of the Church*, 6:600.
9. See Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 4:539.
10. George Cannon, quoted in “The Twelve Apostles,” in Andrew Jenson, ed., *The Historical Record*, 6:175.
11. 1 Peter 2:8.
12. “The Testimony of Three Witnesses,” Book of Mormon.
13. “The Testimony of Eight Witnesses,” Book of Mormon; italics added.
14. 2 Nephi 33:10–11; italics added.
15. Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37.

Elder Quentin L. Cook

Accountability and stewardship

We live in perilous times when many believe we are not accountable to God and that we do not have personal responsibility or stewardship for ourselves or others. Many in the world are focused on self-gratification, put themselves first, and love pleasure more than they love righteousness. They do not believe they are their brother’s keeper. In the Church, however, we believe that these stewardships are a sacred trust.

Recently a group of highly respected Jewish leaders and rabbis visited Church facilities in the Salt Lake Valley, including Welfare Square, the Humanitarian Center, the Family History Library, and the Oquirrh Mountain Utah Temple open house. At the conclusion of their visit, one of the most eminent rabbis in America expressed his feelings about what he had seen and felt.¹

He cited concepts from Jewish thinkers rooted in the Talmud² and pointed out that there are two very different reasons people engage in acts of kindness and generosity. Some people visit the sick, assist the poor, and serve their fellowmen because they believe it is the right thing to do and others will reciprocate and do the same for them when they are in need. He explained that while this is good, builds caring

communities, and should be considered a noble reason, a higher motive is when we serve our fellowmen because that is what we believe God wants us to do.

He stated that as a result of his visit, he believed the Latter-day Saints undertake welfare and humanitarian efforts and the work of salvation in our temples in order to do what we believe God wants us to do.

This feeling of accountability, which is encompassed by the first great commandment to love God, has been described by some as “obedience to the unenforceable.”³ We try to do what is right because we love and want to please our Father in Heaven, not because someone is forcing us to obey.

The War in Heaven was fought after Satan said that he would force everyone to obey his ideas. That was rejected. As a result, we have our moral agency and the freedom to choose our course in this life. But we also are accountable for that agency. The Lord has said we will be “accountable for [our] own sins in the day of judgment.”⁴ The principles of accountability and stewardship have great significance in our doctrine.⁵

In the Church, stewardship is *not* limited to a *temporal* trust or responsibility. President Spencer W. Kimball taught: “We