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GOOD AND EVIL SPOKEN OF  
AMONG ALL PEOPLE

Address Given By  
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Council of the Twelve

BYU Management Society Dinner  
Washington, D.C.

February 7, 1986

GOOD AND EVIL SPOKEN OF  
AMONG ALL PEOPLE  
(JS-H 1:33)

*My genuine thanks to Bill Marriott for the generous introduction which is undeserved, but not unappreciated!*

*First, a caveat: this is not an address I can give in less than 45 minutes. Now, if any of you wish to head for the exits, I will surely understand.*

**Y**ears ago, I first said that if we in the Church were merely non-smoking humanists, we would attract little attention. Instead, since we make unusual declarations, there are unusual allegations. After all, the Prophet Joseph was told by Moroni that Joseph's name would be "good and evil spoken of among all people." (JS-H 1:33.)

This city's residents, more than most, appreciate the fact that initial sensations, impressions, and accusations are often never fully overtaken by the truth, which must make its way arduously and slowly. However, eventually, not only does time heal wounds, but, as someone has said, "time wounds all heels."

**F**or a number of years, the Church has actually enjoyed relative freedom from attack. Recently there has been a building barrage. Partly because, as the Church grows and becomes ever more multi-national, it evokes a growing curiosity. Partly, too, this is because the Church, in some respects, is going against the cultural grain. Furthermore, the Church is an institution not easily understood by those outsiders who, whether viewing us as a cult or corporation, end up "looking beyond the mark." (Jacob 4:14.)

Add to all this the media with their understandable, but also incurable, appetite for sensation. The result is a combination of attention, fascination and allegation. Happily, there have been occasional, balanced treatments. Institutionally, we must do our part better to make the latter more frequent.

The Christian's challenge of meeting various attacks is, of course, not really new. Paul's imagery suggested that disciples use the "shield of faith" to "quench all the fiery darts of the adversary." (See Ephesians 6:10-20; 1 Nephi 15:22-24; D&C 3:8; 27:17.) Significantly, *all* darts can be quenched by the shield of faith, unlike human systems of defense which may quench a respectable percentage of adversarial weapons. Paul also advised being affirmatively active with "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:17.) I shall try to be attentive to both those dimensions of discipleship tonight.

**W**hat Church members face now is merely a new generation of fiery salvos, including a few duds and re-used, old darts. Time will not permit discussion of these challenges. I will merely note, illustratively, some responses with references for those who wish more detail. Other attacks will come, but these will be of no avail either among Church members who are gospel grounded. A small sampling of the adversary's unrandom target selections discloses his central concerns.

A first example has been the attacks on the First Vision, alleging that different emphases in several versions in the accounts of that theophany negated the reality of that experience. Professor Milton Backman responded with an excellent article in the January, 1985, *Ensign* magazine and in the January, 1986, *Ensign* with even more enriching, harmonizing, and corroborating material.

Again, however adequate such responses to various attacks are, the attacks will not cease coming. The adversary knew *then* how crucial that vision would be, and he will seek even *now* to blunt the results of that vision.

Another unsurprising target has been the Holy Temples.

**W**hen Brigham Young started temple building again in the American West, someone reminded him that "We never began to build a temple without the bells of hell beginning to ring." Unintimidated Brigham Young calmly replied, "I want to hear them ring again!" (JD,

Vol. 8, p. 355.) We are surely hearing them again now!

The recent mocking and misrepresenting of temple rituals involve sacred matters which Church members do not feel free to discuss. Church members take their temple covenants seriously, even if others mock and distort these covenants. Most non-members accord to us the same tolerance concerning the things we hold sacred, which we endeavor to extend to them. Meanwhile, members rooted in Christ are neither summoned nor startled by "The bells of hell." Instead, they go quietly but effectively about their Father's business, knowing with Elisha "They that be with us are more than they that be with them." (2 Kings 6:16.)

A book will issue soon, by Brother Gil Scharrfs, an Institute instructor, constituting his own response to misinformation about the Church's teachings and certain distortions about temples.

Odd darts have also appeared, such as the efforts to diminish the testimony of Elder Brigham H. Roberts. I say odd, because for some time certain individuals have praised Elder Roberts as an outstanding intellectual but, strangely, questioned his integrity, suggesting that he lacked the intellectual honesty to declare himself publicly with regard to private doubts he supposedly had concerning the Book of Mormon.

A helpful article was written by Professor Truman Madsen and published in the December, 1983, *Ensign* chronicling Brother Robert's consistent witness. More recently, a new book has appeared raising critical questions concerning Elder Roberts. This book has been reviewed, bluntly and preliminarily, by Professors Jack Welch and Truman Madsen of the Brigham Young University. There will be a lengthier article in the forthcoming March, 1986, *Ensign* magazine, along with further responses in scholarly journals.

For those for whom any explanation for the Book of Mormon will do but the real one—the trendy thing is to cite Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews*. The presumed parallels between the Book of Mormon and Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* are part of

Professor Jack Welch's aforementioned review. Point by point, he discusses 26 vague similarities, but cites 84 glaring differences. Besides, we have no evidence that Joseph Smith ever read Ethan Smith's book or was influenced by it.

**F**or my own part, the most significant thing is the absence of profound spiritual content in *View of the Hebrews*, which I have read. Ethan Smith's was a sincere literary effort, using Old Testament prophecies to create both identity and sympathy for the Indians, as being descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes. Wrote Ethan,

Other and similar societies in favour of the Jews are becoming numerous . . . My present object is rather to attend to the present state of the ten tribes of Israel. (Smith, Ethan. *View of the Hebrews*, p. 68-69.)

Ethan Smith did not presume to declare doctrine or issue scripture. His lines, therefore, are not even in the same universe of doctrinal declarativeness or spiritual significance as the truths which came through Joseph Smith. The very opening notes in "Chopsticks" and Beethoven's Fifth Symphony are substantially the same — but what an enormous difference in that which follows! The bold truths which came through Joseph were not derived as if from some imaginary ministerial, mail-order theology house.

**D**octrinal declarative, by itself, is impressive. So is eloquence. When combined, these are stunning! From one unlearned and untrained in imagery and theology came doctrines so light-intensive — like radioactive materials — they must be handled with great care! Note the declarations and implications of these samplings from the Book of Mormon.

First, set forth with specificity, are the attributes of child-likeness without which, said Jesus, we cannot enter His kingdom (See Matthew 18:3):

For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ

the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. (Mosiah 3:19; See Matthew 18:3.)

Next, another dimension was added to the suffering of the Atonement, including the means by which Jesus perfected His empathy and mercy while in the flesh:

And [Christ] shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; . . . he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities. (Alma 7:11-12.)

**T**hese truths came, fully formed, from King Benjamin and Alma, even if they were not fully comprehended by Joseph or others at the time. What came *through* Joseph was *beyond* him, and it *stretched* him. He did not receive such truths through Solomon Spaulding, Ethan Smith, Sidney Rigdon, or Oliver Cowdery!

Actually, these and other truths of the restored gospel exist today in what is a vast sea of secular indifference. But, closer at hand, are the flotsam of falsehood and thin ring of resentment involving a few who have left the Church but who cannot leave it alone. In Lehi's vision, some believers who had held to the gospel's iron rod would be affected by external criticism (See I Nephi 8:28, 33), becoming ashamed and falling away, but, oddly, not for any objective reason.

Meanwhile, the vast majority of members who keep the commandments continue to experience the sequence of blessings Jesus promised:

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. (John 7:17.)

Disciples in earlier times of defection were not reeds "shaken with the wind"; they said, "We believe and are sure" (Matthew 11:7; John 6:69.) Besides, "Lord to whom shall we go, Thou hast the words of eternal life." (John 6:68.)

Stress is to be a part of this mortal experience. Faith was not to be casual or cost-free.

Remember this wintry verse?

Nevertheless the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith. (Mosiah 23:21.)

**T**here are always those — it seems — who would rather steady the ark than steady themselves. Still others do not realize the limitations of useful, but imperfect, human history, as did Winston Churchill:

History with its flickering lamp stumbles along the trail of the past, trying to reconstruct its scenes, to revive its echoes, and kindle with pale gleams the passion of former days. (Tribute to Neville Chamberlain, House of Commons, 12 November, 1940.)

Actually, if certain of this dispensation's "old timers" were here, they would be amused at our present consternation in the midst of these comparatively mild attacks.

There is a legal doctrine meaning "the thing speaks for itself." The Everest-like peak of ecclesiastical truth which has been built up from the translations and revelations coming through the Prophet Joseph Smith speaks for itself, as it towers above the mere foothills of philosophy. Most will ignore it. Others will reject the Restoration, understandably supplying their own alternative explanations, just as did those who once heard thunder instead of the voice of God. (See John 12:27-30.)

The Restoration responds, nevertheless, to the key human questions. Do we actually live in an unexplained and unexplainable universe? Is there really purpose and meaning to human existence? Why such unevenness in the human condition and so much human suffering?

**S**o much of what was restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith concerning the plan of salvation is strikingly responsive to these questions and provides the framework of our faith.

First of all, we have multiple confirmations and elaborations concerning the reality and actuality of the existence of Jesus Christ including before Bethlehem and after Calvary.

Note what else was given along with this wondrous witness of 1832.

For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God. (D&C 76:23, 24.)

Through the Prophet Joseph Smith came a unique dispensational view of mankind's religious history from initiation to completion. In 1835, at Kirtland, this gem arrived, almost "tucked in" amid words otherwise concerned with the duties of the Twelve and Seventies.

Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called . . . the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing.

And the Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him Michael, the prince, the archangel.

And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam, and said unto him: I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, and thou art a prince over them forever.

And Adam stood up in the midst of the congregation; and, notwithstanding he was bowed down with age, being full of the Holy Ghost, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation.

These things were all written in the book of Enoch, and are to be testified of in due time. (D&C 107:53-57.)



**L**atter-day Saints expectantly await the Book of Enoch as being among the “many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” which God “will yet reveal” (9th Article of Faith). By the way, as Professor Robert Matthews has observed, through Joseph, we received 18 times as much as is in the Bible concerning Enoch. Without the Restoration, we would not even know there was a City of Enoch!

In Joseph Smith’s 1829 work of translation, there was this nugget:

And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; . . . therefore they are called with a holy calling, . . . (Alma 13:3.)

**T**his came through the Prophet Joseph in 1842 concerning foreordination, the purpose of this planet and the wintry doctrine about our mortal tutorials:

And God . . . stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, . . . and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou was chosen before thou wast born.

And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them (Abraham 3:23-25) (See Jeremiah 1:5).

How vast is God’s work of which we are part? This “precious morsel” was given Joseph in June 1830 as part of what God told Moses anciently:

And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten. . . .

But only an account of this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, give I unto you. For behold, there are many worlds that have passed away by the word of my power. And there are many that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man; but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them (Moses 1:33,35.). (See also D&C 88:46-47, 61.)

**T**hese marvelous truths are, at one and the same time, highly global, highly personal, and even galactic in their dimensions! Identity exists amid immensity. We are enclosed in Divine purposes! There is no need for existential despair! No wonder the restored gospel is a message of "good tidings."

These and other revelations came to us through an inspired Prophet Joseph Smith whose spelling left something to be desired. Yet, how he provided us with the essential grammar of the gospel!

Our present appreciation of the restored gospel lags far behind the stretching significance of its doctrines and theology. So far as exploring the terrain of truth opened to us by the Prophet Joseph is concerned, in our trek, we have barely reached the Platte River!

While we thus revere the Prophet Joseph Smith and sustain him as a prophet, seer, and revelator of remarkable proportions, we should heed what the Prophet stipulated near the end of his life, "... I never told you I was perfect; but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught . . ." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972. p. 368.)

The Prophet is, however, that "choice seer" of whom ancient Joseph spoke (2 Nephi 3:6-11), a major spiritual benefactor of the world. His salvational impact ultimately will be enormous, as the demographics of this dispensation alone assure. (See C&C 135:3.)

**M**ore pages of scripture have been received (by translation and by revelation) through the Prophet Joseph Smith—by many, many times—than through any other individual in human history.

Like another prophet, Joseph served “notwithstanding [his] weakness” (2 Nephi 33:11), while “out of [Joseph’s] weakness he shall be made strong” (2 Nephi 3:13). At one point, when he was translating in first Nephi in the fourth chapter, Emma was acting as his scribe. Joseph encountered the words about the wall around Jerusalem. He reportedly paused and asked Emma, if, in fact, there was a wall around Jerusalem. She replied in the affirmative. Joseph said he hadn’t known. (*History of RLDS Church*, Vol. 4, p. 447.) According to Emma, when she and Joseph were interrupted during his translating, Joseph would later resume on the very sentence from which he earlier left off. (*Saints Herald*, 26, [October 1, 1879]: 289-290; See also Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, p. 62, concerning Section 50.)

We would like to know about that process of translation. In October, 1831, Joseph Smith was asked by his brother, Hyrum Smith, at a conference held in Orange, Ohio, to give a first-hand account concerning the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. The Prophet replied “that it was not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon; and . . . it was not expedient for him to relate these things.” (Smith, Joseph, *History of the Church*, Vol. 1., p. 220, Salt Lake City, Deseret Book, 1974.) Since Joseph, who knew the “particulars,” chose not to describe them in detail then, we cannot be definitive about methodology now. But we can savor the supernal substance of the revelations and translations.

**J**oseph Smith’s time was one of religious fervor: “Lo, here . . . !” “Lo, there . . . !” is Christ, (JS-H 1:5.) Ours is an age when, instead, the historicity of Christ is increasingly questioned, a condition which only increases the relevance of the restoration with its affirmation of Jesus’ reality and resurrection.

While Jesus declared that the scriptures “testify” of Him (John 5:39), He neither expected nor received much coverage in secular history. Therefore, it is no surprise for studious Christians to learn that the secular history of that meridian period is nearly

silent about the ministry of Jesus. Three secular writers only, each born shortly after Jesus' crucifixion, touched slightly upon of Christ. Tacitus (about 55-117 A.D.), thought by many to be the greatest Roman historian, wrote only this: "Christus . . . had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilatus . . ." (*Annals of Tacitus*, Book XV, p. 283.)

**S**uetonius (about 70-140 A.D.), a Roman who wrote about the lives of various Caesars, called Jesus "Chrestus" and provided a sentence linking Chrestus to civil disturbance. Yet even this brief mention may contain a possible chronological error. (Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, Book V, p. 52, 53.)

Josephus (about 37-95 A.D.), in his *Antiquities*, wrote a few lines about the founder of Christianity, but later interpolations and omissions may cloud his meager lines.

Joseph Smith was an eye-witness of the resurrected Christ. Yet as with all true disciples, Joseph went through a process of *proving, reproof, and improving*, while simultaneously serving as the human conduit through whom God chose to give his "word" to "this generation . . ." (D&C 5:10.)

The period of adversity commencing in Richmond Jail and continuing in Liberty Jail from December 1, 1838, until the first week in April 1839 provides a special window through which we can see the process of revelation and personal consolidation underway. Elder B.H. Roberts called the jail the "prison temple." Ironically, this period of enforced idleness, grim though the conditions were, was perhaps the only time in the Prophet's often hectic, adult life when there was much time for reflection.

**T**he dungeon had inner and outer walls, which combined, were four feet thick. Loose rocks in between the walls would thwart any attempt at burrowing through. Joseph and his companions tried twice to escape, but failed. Thick as those walls were, and as securely as they kept the Prophet and his fellow prisoners in, the walls were not thick enough to keep revelation out!

During his stay in Liberty Jail, the Prophet Joseph Smith received some of the most sublime revelations

ever received by any prophet in any dispensation, known now as Doctrine and Covenants, Sections 121 and 122. Therein are divine tutorials by which the Lord schooled His latter-day prophet, probably the most tender tutorials in all of holy writ.

For example, Joseph Smith was probably first made intellectually aware of the special relationship he had with ancient Joseph, whom we commonly refer to as Joseph in Egypt, when the Prophet Joseph first translated the third chapter of Second Nephi. It was not until Liberty Jail that the record indicates any public affirmation of this unusual relationship. In one of his last letters from Liberty Jail, Joseph wrote, “. . . I feel like Joseph in Egypt . . .” (Smith, Joseph. *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*. Compiled and edited by Dean Jesse. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984, p. 409.) It was not an idle comparison.

**F**ive years later, when Joseph Smith, Jr. was given a blessing by Father Smith in December of 1834, an extensive portion of that blessing informed modern Joseph of his special relationship to ancient Joseph.

An important verse in the third chapter of Second Nephi records ancient Joseph speaking of the latter-day seer and saying, “And he shall be like unto me.” (2 Nephi 3:15.) The comparisons between the two Josephs, of course, reflect varying degrees of exactitude, but they are, nevertheless, quite striking. Some similarities are situational, others dispositional. Some are strategic, such as ancient Joseph’s making stored grain available (see Genesis 41:56) in time of famine, while modern Joseph opened the granary of the gospel after years of famine.

First, both Josephs had inauspicious beginnings. Initially, they were unlikely candidates to have had the impact they did on Egyptian history and American history, respectively.

Both had visions at a young and tender age. (See Genesis 37:2-5; Smith Chapter 1.)

The visions brought hate to both men. (Genesis 37:5-8; Smith 1:21-26.) Both knew sibling jealousy. Modern Joseph had to contend with a mercurial brother, William, whom Joseph forgave so many times. (*History of the Church*, Vol. 2, 353-354.)

**B**oth Josephs were generous to those who betrayed them. Ancient Joseph was generous to his once-betraying brothers whom he later saved from starvation. (See Genesis 43:29-30.)

Both prophesied remarkably of the future of their nations and the challenges their governments would face. (Genesis 41:30-31; D&C 87.)

Next, both knew what it was to be falsely accused. Further, both were jailed.

Both, in their extremities, helped others who shared their imprisonment, but later forgot them. In the case of ancient Joseph, it was the chief butler (Genesis 40:20-23). Joseph Smith worried over an ill cell mate, Sidney Rigdon, who was freed in January, 1839. The Prophet rejoiced. Three months later, the Prophet inquired "after Elder Rigdon if he has not forgotten us." (*Writings*, p. 399.)

Both Josephs were torn from their families, although ancient Joseph for a much, much longer time.

Very significantly, both were "like unto" each other in being resilient in the midst of adversity. This, in each man, is a truly striking quality.

Both were understandably anxious about their loved ones and friends. Ancient Joseph, when his true identity became known, inquired tenderly of his brothers, "Doth my father yet live?" (Genesis 45:3.) From Liberty Jail, the Prophet Joseph Smith, doubtless with comparative awareness, wrote, "doth my friends yet live and if they live, do they remember me [?]" (*Writings*, p. 409).

Indeed, these two uncommon men had much in common, being truly "like unto" each other!

**T**he prison-temple was a time of obscurity, adversity, irony, and testimony. W. W. Phelps had briefly faltered and had been a part of the betrayal that placed Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail. Joseph was, at the time, indignant over Brother Phelps' failures. Yet, later on, Joseph was generous. The next year, 1840, when W. W. Phelps pled for readmission into the Church, Joseph Smith, who pledged from jail to act later "in the spirit of generosity" wrote a powerful and redemptive letter the closing lines of which were,

"Come on Dear Brother, for the war is past. For friends at first are friends again at last."

No wonder a grateful Brother Phelps, just after Joseph's June, 1844, martyrdom, quickly composed "Praise to the Man Who Communed with Jehovah." (*Hymns*, 1985; p. 27.)

The ironies in Liberty Jail are many. Though deprived of his constitutional rights, Joseph Smith praised the glorious U.S. constitution. After the misery of Missouri, Joseph declared inspired anticipation:

I am willing to be sacrificed . . . maintaining the laws and Constitution of the United States if need be for the general good of mankind (*Words*, p. 320).

**W**hile being grossly abused by some biased political, judicial, and military leaders who wrongly used their powers, Joseph received a glorious revelation. A sizable portion of that revelation, section 121, contrastingly sets forth the style and substance the Lord wants from His leaders, which diverges so sharply from the ways of the world. (See D&C 121:34-46.)

Though Joseph was jailed nearly five months, more than four of these in Liberty Jail, he was told by the tutoring Lord, these things shall be "but for a small moment." (D&C 122:4.) Though Joseph was suffering, the Lord reminded him that Joseph was not even suffering as much as Job. (D&C 121:7-11; 122:8.) Only the Lord can compare crosses, and on that particular occasion He did.

The conditions in the Liberty Jail were grim. The food that was brought to them was scanty and often consisted of nothing more than the left-overs from the jailer's table brought to them in a basket in which chickens slept at night and which was often not cleaned. When the prisoners were permitted to cook, they had to endure smoke. It was also a particularly cold winter. The constant darkness bothered the prisoners' eyes. Joseph wrote about how his hand actually trembled as he penned his next to last letter to Emma. (*Writings*, p. 409.)

In the midst of this stark obscurity and incessant difficulty, and with 12,000 of Joseph's followers driven from the state of Missouri, the enemies of the

Church, at least some of them, doubtless felt that Joseph's work was destroyed. Yet in the midst of all this deprivation, affliction, and obscurity, Joseph received the Lord's stunning assurance, that "the ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name." (D&C 122:1.)

How inspired and audacious a prophecy for any 19th century religious leader, let alone one on the American Frontier. Meanwhile, his contemporary frontier, religious leaders have since become mere footnotes to history. Not Joseph!

Joseph, earlier in his imprisonment, had special assurances of which he later wrote,

Death stared me in the face, and . . . my destruction was determined, as far as man was concerned; yet, from my first entrance into the camp, . . . that still small voice which has so often whispered consolation to my soul, in the depths of sorrow and distress, bade me be of good cheer and promised deliverance which gave me great comfort. (November, 1839, p. 443.)

However, Joseph was not unmindful or unaware of how grim things looked. With unusual empathy he observed from the prison-temple: "those who have persecuted us and smitten us and borne false witness against us . . . do seem to have a great triumph over us for the present"; then, "[But] . . . Zion shall yet live though she seemeth to be dead." (*Writings*, p. 375, 382.)

It was from Liberty Jail that Joseph, more than once, testified that through God "we received the Book of Mormon" (*Writings*, p. 399) and that . . . "the Book of Mormon is true . . . the ministering angels sent forth from God are true." (*Writings*, p. 407.)

It was soon after Liberty Jail that the Prophet Joseph Smith spoke about how the Book of Mormon was "the keystone of our religion." (*History of the Church*, Vol. 4, p. 46.)

**A**fter the Liberty Jail also, the Prophet gave fervent public testimony about the Book of Mormon. This was to a congregation of about 3,000 in Philadelphia. When Sidney Rigdon in his remarks on that same occasion seemed to be neglecting the Book of Mormon in favor of citing the Bible, Joseph took the pulpit and declared, "If nobody else had the courage to testify of so glorious



a message from Heaven, and of the finding of so glorious a record, he felt to do it" (*Words*, p. 45). The atmosphere, according to one present, was electric.

This is not to say, of course, that Joseph had not earlier been clear and declarative regarding the Book of Mormon. For instance, in an 1834 sermon, Joseph observed, "Take away the Book of Mormon and the revelations, and where is our religion?" (Smith, Joseph. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972, p. 71.)

Significantly, Joseph was released from the bondage of Liberty Jail April 6, 1839, and a few days later was allowed to escape from his captors enroute.

As you know, the date of April 6, is Jesus' birth date. It is also the birth date of His Church. (D&C 20:1.)

The time of Joseph's release from the bondage of jail, by the way, is often part of the season of passover when our Jewish friends celebrate ancient Israel's deliverance and release from bondage in Egypt!

The day, April 6, 1839, when the Prophet Joseph ended his bondage in Liberty Jail, involved yet another significant event. Heber C. Kimball, in his journal, recorded that on April 6, 1839,

. . . the following words came to my mind, and the Spirit said to me, 'write,' which I did by taking a piece of paper and writing on my knee as follows . . . 'verily I say unto my servant Heber, thou art my son, in whom I am well pleased; for thou art careful to hearken to my words, and not transgress my law, nor rebel against my servant Joseph Smith, for thou has a respect to the words of mine anointed, even from the least to the greatest of them; therefore thy name is written in heaven, no more to be blotted out for ever, because of these things. (*Words*, p. 18.)

Note how much importance the Lord attached to our being loyal to His servants! It is no different now.

**W**ith regard to the ministry of Joseph Smith, there are significant expressions of Divine determination. In each of these examples, the Lord issued His declarations using the word "shall". There are 20 "shalls" in 2 Nephi, Chapter 3 alone!

The various books of scripture which were to come through the "choice seer" "shall grow together." (2 Nephi 3:12.) The books of scripture which came through Joseph Smith are joined with the Holy Bible, and especially now with the new publications of the holy scriptures.

Another promise was given in that same chapter: those who would try to destroy the work of the Latter-day seer "shall be confounded." (2 Nephi 3:14.) This promise continues to be kept.

Joseph also received another "shall" promise, which likewise has never been revoked: "Thy people shall never be turned against thee by the testimony of traitors." (C&C 122:3.) This continues to be true today.

Furthermore, the central theme of tutoring in Liberty Jail was also a promise. "All these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good." (D&C 122:7.)

Indeed, as the Lord had promised ancient Joseph, "choice seer shall I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins . . ." (2 Nephi 3:7).

Joseph Smith, Jr., was that "choice seer"! All the "shall" promises about him "shall" be fulfilled, as the "ends of the earth shall inquire after [his] name." (D&C 122:1.)

Brigham Young, who was not that easily impressed by anyone, observed that before he met Joseph Smith, he was searching for just a seer:

The secret feeling in my heart was that I would be willing to crawl around the earth on my hands and knees to see such a man as Peter, Jeremiah, Moses, or any man that could tell me anything about God in heaven . . . when I saw Joseph Smith, he took heaven figuratively speaking and brought it down to earth; and he took the earth, and brought it up, and opened it up, in plainness and simplicity, to the things of God; that is the beauty of his mission. (Nibley, *The Timely and the Timeless*, p. 212.)

On another occasion, Brigham said he felt like e e s shouting "Hallelujah!" all the time that he ever knew v v v Joseph Smith. (*JD*, Vol. 3, No. 4, p. 51.) Significantly, s s s Brigham's last mortal words were, "Joseph, Joseph, s s s Joseph." (Arrington, Leonard J. *Brigham Young*: s s s

*American Moses.* Alfred A. Knopf, New York: 1985, p. 399.)

**W**e have obligations to the Lord's prophets including being fair, posthumously, concerning their words. The "choice seer," Joseph, for instance, reminded the Church in an epistle (December, 1838) from jail, that, "our light speeches from time to time . . . have nothing to do with the fixed principles of our hearts." (*Writings*, p. 376.) Should we not distinguish between the utterances of the moment and considered opinions? Do not all of us wish for that same understanding on the part of our friends, hoping they "with the breath of kindness" will "blow the chaff away?"

We are wise to follow, therefore, the example of Lorenzo Snow rather than that of Thomas B. Marsh. Marsh let himself become too preoccupied with the imperfections in the Prophet Joseph Smith, until Marsh found himself disaffected and out of the Church for a season. Lorenzo Snow said that he had observed some imperfections in the Prophet Joseph Smith, but, instead, his reaction was that it was marvelous to see how the Lord could still use Joseph. Seeing this, Elder Lorenzo Snow—later President Snow—concluded that there might even be some hope for him!

One of the great messages which flows from the Lord's use of Joseph Smith as "a choice seer" in the latter-days is that there is indeed hope for each of us! The Lord can call us in our weaknesses and yet magnify us for His purposes.

Significantly, in the 1834 Blessing, Father Smith also promised his Prophet Son, "Thy heart shall meditate great wisdom and comprehend the deep things of God." From Liberty Jail, the Prophet Joseph wrote how "things of God are of deep import." (*Writings*, p. 396, 397.) Jesus taught that high-yield disciples have "deepness of earth." (Matthew 13:5.) Joseph Smith had "deepness of earth," but it took some special harrowing to prepare that deep soil.

**I**n the 1834 blessing, Father Smith promised Joseph, "Thou shalt fill up the measure of thy days." The Lord likewise reassured the Prophet in Liberty Jail, "Thy days are known, and thy years

shall not be numbered less . . . " (D&C 122:9). It proved to be so. However, the Prophet was conscious of the pressures of time upon him. President Brigham Young, who visited Joseph in the prison-temple, noted that Joseph told him, more than once, that he, Joseph, would not live to see his 40th year. (*Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, July 28, 1844.)

In the 1834 blessing, Joseph was promised that during his ministry "Thy heart shall be enlarged." An enlarged Joseph wrote from Liberty Jail,

It seems to me my heart will always be more tender after this than ever it was before . . . for my part, I think I never could have felt as I now do if I had not suffered for the wrongs which I have suffered. (*Writings*, p. 387.)

In the 1834 blessing, the Prophet Joseph was promised that "Thou shalt like to do the work the Lord thy God shall command thee." How often that intrinsic satisfaction sustained the Seer, when extrinsic conditions were so unsatisfactory!

On April 4, 1839, Joseph wrote his last letter to Emma from Liberty Jail "Just as the sun is going down" . . . while peeking through the "grates of this lonesome prison" . . . "with emotions known only to God." (*Writings*, p. 425.)

Such was Joseph's view of a temporal sunset that evening. But what a view of eternity he had and gave us!

**J**oseph, as B.H. Roberts wrote, lived "in crescendo"! Looking back upon his busy, task filled years, the Prophet said near the end, "No man knows my history. I cannot tell it; I shall never undertake it. I don't blame anyone for not believing my history. If I had not experienced what I have, I could not have believed it myself." (*History of the Church*, Vol. 6, p. 317.) Thus, even in his adversity, Joseph had unusual empathy.

This empathy extended beyond Joseph's own time and circumstances. He actually saw his prison sufferings as helping and expanding him "to understand the minds of the ancients." (*Writings*, p. 387.) A linkage was felt with their "afflictions," so that, said Joseph, "in the day of judgment . . . we may hold an even weight in the balances with them." (*Writings*, p. 395.) How else could Joseph take his rightful

place, "crowned in the midst of the prophets of old"?  
(*Hymns*. 1985, p. 27.)

**P**raise to that "choice seer" who communed with Jehovah! Let us get on with his work . . . even in the midst of a few, fiery darts, wielding the sword of truth and holding shields of faith aloft.

What came through the Prophet Joseph significantly restructured our understanding of "things as they really are." (Jacob 4:13.) Incredible insights and towering truths emerged, reflecting in temples antiquity and explaining why these were Christian teachings prior to the Christian era. Erroneous concepts were challenged, such as *original sin* and *predestination*.

Dilemmas were dissolved, such as those inherent in the provincial *ex nihilo* view of man's creation.

Little wonder, as prophesied, the defamation of Joseph is so widespread. Little wonder, as foretold, the inquiries after his name came from the "ends of the earth."

I gladly and gratefully testify to this distinguished audience, Joseph was and is a prophet of God, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen!