

Using the Scriptures

ROBERT J. MATTHEWS

I think this is one of the greatest opportunities that I have ever had to give a public address. I would like to do well for a number of reasons, and I want you to know that I am very serious about what I'm going to say. One reason I would like to do well is that if I do not, it might reflect adversely upon the role of Religious Instruction at BYU and upon the office I hold as dean. I would not want to say or do anything to minimize that important assignment. Also, I would not want the subject that I wish to talk about—the scriptures—to be minimized because of my poor delivery. So I think you would know that I have prayed much and read much and sought much for help and inspiration in order to give this address today. I feel a great need for the help of the Holy Spirit, not only to be with me in order that I might think clearly and speak clearly, but also to be with you so that you might hear clearly and that that same Spirit, because of your willingness, might draw out of me the things that ought to be said.

I feel a little today like something Elder Matthew Cowley said one time. He said when he was a young man getting ready to leave on a mission, his father went to the railroad station with him and said, in effect: "My boy, when you go out on that mission, you will stand before groups to speak, and you will

think you are wonderfully prepared, but when you stand up your mind will go completely blank."

Brother Cowley said to his father, "What do you do when your mind goes blank?"

And his father said, "You stand up there, and, with all the fervor of your soul, you bear witness that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the living God, and thoughts will flood into your mind, and words to your mouth, to round out those thoughts in a facility of expression that will carry conviction to the heart of everyone who listens."

Brother Cowley, being a man with a great sense of humor, said,

And so my mind, being mostly blank during my five years in the mission field, gave me the opportunity to bear testimony to the greatest event in the history of the world since the crucifixion of the Master.

Try it sometime. . . . If you don't have anything else to say, testify that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and the whole history of the Church will

Robert J. Matthews was dean of Religious Instruction at Brigham Young University when this devotional address was given on 14 July 1981.

flood into your mind. [Adapted from *Matthew Cowley Speaks* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954), pp. 298–99]

Those are the kinds of things we'll talk about today. I would like to express some views and quote some of the Brethren, and I would like to read some scripture and reflect upon a few things; then I hope that by the time the clock says it's time to depart, we'll all feel good for having been here. I listened carefully to the opening prayer and to the words that were said about this being an uplifting time. I was uplifted by that prayer and by the beautiful music that we've heard, both the solo and the congregational singing. I would like to continue my portion of this experience by talking about some very spiritual things. I would say, first of all, that there is nothing we can study in a secular way that will ever influence our lives as much as does our religion. Religion influences what we eat, what we drink or don't drink, and what we wear. It influences our speech, our choice of friends, whom we marry, where we marry, and when we marry. It influences how we spend our time as well as most of our money. There is nothing as encompassing as what we believe about religion and about the gospel. And since it is so encompassing, we ought to expect that in the gospel of Jesus Christ, there are answers to all other disciplines and all other fields of endeavor.

There are two phrases that I find in the scriptures that I will reflect upon a bit today. One is *gaining a hope in Christ*, the other is *filling the measure of our creation*; in other words, our lives have a purpose, and it is good for us if, while we are in mortality, we can discover that purpose.

I will read a statement from Elder Orson Pratt, from the *Millennial Star*, volume 28, p. 72–73. This statement by Elder Pratt gives a broad, expansive, and very realistic view of eternity. He said:

A Saint, who is one in deed and truth, does not look for an immaterial heaven, but he expects a heaven with lands, houses, cities, vegetation, rivers, and animals; with thrones, temples, palaces, kings, princes, priests, and angels; with food, raiment, musical instruments, &c; all of which are material. Indeed, the Saint's heaven is a redeemed, glorified celestial material creation, inhabited by glorified material beings, male and female, organized into families, embracing all the relationships of husbands and wives, parents and children, where sorrow, crying, pain, and death will be known no more. Or to speak still more definitely, this earth, when glorified, is the Saints' eternal heaven. On it they expect to live, with body, parts, and holy passions: on it they expect to move and have their being; to eat, drink, converse, worship, sing, play on musical instruments, engage in joyful, innocent, social amusements, visit neighboring towns and neighboring worlds: indeed, matter and its qualities and properties are the only beings or things with which they expect to associate. . . . Materiality is indelibly stamped upon the very heaven of heavens, upon all the eternal creations; it is the very essence of all existence.

If we believe what he has said and have the feeling in our hearts that the next world is as real as this one, then, you see, the gospel that is taught to us through the scriptures and by the prophets ought to deal with more than just a narrow and flimsy idea of heaven's being only a place where we sit on a cloud and sing praises and so on. In other words, the gospel ought to cover every aspect of life. In like manner, salvation deals with every aspect of existence. I have another statement from Elder Pratt. It was included in a lecture on astronomy which he gave at the University of Deseret in Salt Lake City and was published in a little book called *Wonders of the Universe*:

What rational being can look upward into the blue vault of heaven, and behold the sun in its effulgent glory; the moon, shining with a silvery brightness,

. . . the stars . . . twinkling, as it were, with joy, and lighting up the dark unfathomable abyss of an unknown immensity; what rational being . . . can behold this . . . sublime scenery without feeling the most intense desire to unlock the heavenly archives, and read, from the great book of creation, the grand science of the origin of worlds, the laws by which they are governed, and their eternal destinies? Kings upon their thrones, and the humble shepherd in the field, have alike participated in this sublime emotion. . . . While the man of God, with loftier views and higher aspirations, has soared aloft from nature up to nature's Author —

And here's the point that I want to make. A true man of God isn't content with studying just the things of the world and of the universe unless it also includes a study of the Creator.

and, overpowered with the infinite greatness and resplendent glories which surround him on every side, he bows in humble adoration before the great Eternal. [Salt Lake City, Utah, 1937, p. 2]

President Spencer W. Kimball, in the April 1979 conference, discussed some of the progress the Church had made, but even more, some of the progress which it was about to make, and I'd like to read what he said:

The Church is at a point in its growth and maturity when we are at last ready to move forward in a major way. . . . But the basic decisions needed for us to move forward as a people, must be made by the individual members of the Church. . . . We have paused on some plateaus long enough. . . . The Church is ready now to accomplish . . . things which it could not have done just a few years ago. [CR, April 1979, p. 114]

Some of those things that are being accomplished are the great emphasis on and forward march in missionary work in lands where missionaries have not been, with more missionaries than we have ever had before. Another one

of the great steps of progress that the Church is able to make now that it could not make before is in temple work and in genealogical research. There are now ability and opportunity to do things that could not be done before.

There is another aspect of progress, too, that we don't want to overlook, and that is what is being done with the scriptures in the Church. As you know, two years ago there came forth for the first time in the history of this church an edition of the Bible published by the Church. The words of the Bible are still the same (it is the King James Version), but the footnotes, the references, and the study helps and guides have been compiled in order to take full advantage of all the things the Lord has given in latter-day revelation.

We have been warned adequately in the scriptures that the Bible has not come to us in its original purity. Most of what remains is true, but there is much that is missing. When we lose something, we not only lose the part that is gone, but we often lose the key to understanding what is left.

We have now in the Church an edition of the Holy Bible with biblical aids and study helps that surpasses any edition available before. We have cross references to Joseph Smith's Translation and to the other standard works and a super ready-reference system called the Topical Guide. The new publication of the Bible also has new headings for every chapter. They were written by Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the Quorum of the Twelve and are extremely informative. You could almost get by just reading the headings without reading the scriptures. If you should get one of these new editions and read the chapter headings, you'd see the great flood of information and how it helps us to draw out of the chapter that which is really there.

In August of this year there will be a new publication of the triple combination approved by the First Presidency and the Twelve. It was produced under their direction. It will contain

some minor corrections in the text where there have been errors or omissions, and new cross references and footnotes. Again, the benefit we have from the Prophet Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible is clearly manifest in the new triple combination. Every chapter in the Book of Mormon, every section in the Doctrine and Covenants, every chapter in the Pearl of Great Price has a new heading, each of them informative and superior to that which was there before. And so when we are talking about the progress that the Church is making we must include the opportunity the Lord has given us to have a set of scriptures that is more revealing, more correct, and more helpful than what we have had before.

I travel around the Church a little, and I am often in a meeting somewhere other than my regular home ward. I notice as I go around that not all the teachers are using the new edition of the Bible. I had an interesting opportunity and experience recently. I was sitting in a class, and the teacher, knowing that I had had something to do with the preparation of the new LDS publication of the Bible, began to apologize to me that he wasn't using the new Bible in teaching his priesthood class. I felt that he didn't need to apologize to me, but he did so anyway. After the class was over he came to me and said, "I know we ought to be using the new edition of the Bible, but I'm used to these books because these are the ones I marked when I was in the mission field twenty years ago. I am familiar with these, and I have my notes and cross references and so on." That seemed like a pretty good reason, but we walked together to the parking lot and he got in a *new* car and drove away. I thought, "He hasn't kept up in the gospel and in his scripture study the same way he has in automobiles. He didn't continue to use the same car he had used in the mission field, which was 20 years ago."

I believe that's what President Kimball is getting at when he says, "We have paused on some plateaus long enough." It is now time to

move ahead in some areas which the Church could not do before this time.

I will cite some of the many places where Joseph Smith's translation throws some light upon the scriptures where they are not clear in the King James Version. One place is in the Sermon on the Mount. A statement from Matthew 6:32–33 of the King James Version is familiar to all of us. The Savior, speaking to the disciples said:

(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

One might say, "What is the matter with that? It sounds pretty clear; it sounds good. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.'" When Joseph Smith was making a translation of it, he worded it a little differently, and this is the way it reads.

Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness.

At first that may not seem too different, but if you think of it, it is quite different. Do you know a little prayer that goes like this?

*Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep,
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.*

There's nothing wrong with that. It's a nice thought to have at night when you go to bed, but it doesn't require anything of the individual. All you have to do is go to sleep. If you die before the morning, you hope the Lord will

take you. I see no great harm in the thought, but it doesn't require enough of the individual.

This passage that we're talking about says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added" as though once we join, we have it made. On the other hand, in the wording given by the Prophet in the inspired translation, it reads, "Seek to *build up* the kingdom of God." That means that after we join there is still work to do. However the kingdom is when we find it, it ought to be better when we leave it, you see. "Seek ye first to *build up* the kingdom of God and to *establish* his righteousness." It takes a lot more doing to establish righteousness in our own lives or in our community or in the world than it does just to know about it. What we have here is a call for action, a call for commitment.

Now, let me give you an "inspired version" of that little prayer, but we can't thrust the responsibility for this one on the Prophet Joseph Smith:

*Now I get me up to work
I pray the Lord I will not shirk.
If I should die before tonight,
I pray the Lord my work's all right.*

That rendition requires more of the individual than just being there. It draws forth out of him a commitment and a labor and something to do. There are a number of places like that—about 3,410 of them, to be exact—in the scriptures where the true meaning of the scripture is developed and amplified in a manner that we can read and get what was intended. The Book of Mormon tells us that, when the Bible was written originally, it was clear and plain and easily understood and that it contained the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It also tells us that down through the years many plain and precious things have been lost (see 1 Nephi 13:26–39).

The point I want to make is this: I find that by and large, the King James Version tells us what happened; Joseph Smith's translation will add *why* it happened. It gives us the plain and precious insight as to why a certain thing was said or done. For instance, we have in the Bible a rather clear statement *that* God created the world. But in the inspired translation by Joseph Smith, it will also indicate *why* he created the world, which is just about as important to know as the fact that he did it. If we know why he did it, that gives us a better understanding as to how things are. The same is true of a large number of other topics.

There is an account in the seventh chapter of Mark in which it says that Jesus retired to a house and would that no man should come unto him. But he could not be hid, for a certain woman found him and said, "My daughter is ill. Will you come and heal her?" As you read that in the King James Version, you get the impression that Jesus was weary or for some reason wanted to be out of contact with people that day and that he retired to a house, but in spite of all his desires they found him. When you read it in Joseph Smith's translation (and it is Mark 7:24), the basic facts of the case are about the same. He did retire to a house, and he did desire that no man should come unto him. They found him, but not for the reason that he could not be hidden. It says that he could not refuse them, for he had such great compassion upon them. You know and I know, that if Jesus wanted to be hidden, he could stand right here near this pulpit and would not be seen. There was no task too difficult for the Lord. It is unthinkable that he wanted to be alone but couldn't find seclusion—unless we look at the dimension which Joseph Smith's translation adds, and that is that he had such compassion on humanity that his compassion would not let him stay in seclusion. The Joseph Smith Translation brings out a spiritual dimension which otherwise would be overlooked.

There are a great many insights of that nature in the Joseph Smith Translation.

Now I would like to mention a few items about my feelings on some viewpoints or matters of basic understanding that every Latter-day Saint ought to have in mind.

We ought to understand that (1) each of us individually is a son or a daughter of divine celestial parents, (2) that we lived as intelligent individual spirit persons before we were born into this present mortal world, (3) that this earth was prepared on purpose by the Lord as a place for us to obtain physical bodies and to gain experience, (4) that Adam brought about the mortal conditions of this life, and (5) that Jesus Christ is our Elder Brother in the spirit and our personal Savior. (6) He is the only Begotten of the Father in the flesh and the only Savior for this whole world. (7) Without his atonement there could be and would be no salvation or redemption for the people of the world from the fall of Adam. He alone is the Savior and the Redeemer for the whole human family, for all are descendants of Adam, and all have partaken of Adam's fall. (8) We should understand that Joseph Smith is the greatest witness for Christ who lived on this earth since the time of Peter, and (9) that service in the kingdom and in the Church and to our fellow beings is of top priority as to what prepares us for eternity. (10) We should have some feeling that no one can be saved in ignorance of the gospel because without a knowledge of the gospel, we cannot exercise a true faith in Jesus Christ, and without faith in Jesus Christ, no one can be saved. (11) We should understand that there is a devil, that he is the archenemy of our souls, and that he seeks in every possible manner to destroy us. And finally, (12) we ought to have some understanding that the answer to all the problems that we will ever encounter are found in the gospel of Jesus Christ and in its application to our daily lives.

Now, that doesn't mean you could sit down and read the scriptures and immediately find

the answers to your problems. It is not quite like that. Sometimes answers come quickly, but often not. The scriptures contain eternal principles. They contain the word of the Lord, and sometimes when we are reading those principles, the Spirit of the Lord puts into our minds the solution to the problem with which we have been wrestling. And sometimes, as we are reading the scriptures, we comprehend certain principles which we might have overlooked and of which we need to be reminded.

Consequently, there is a reason why we ought to read daily and become acquainted with the scriptures. In addition to that, since salvation deals with every aspect of life, we ought to expect that the scriptures do also. And therefore, in every area of our study and our lives, those principles that are found in the gospel should reach over and help us solve some of the problems and theories that pertain to every other study. The Lord is not one sided. He created the whole world and all the people in it, and he has given us certain guidance so that we might make this journey through life in the best possible manner. Of course, if we are in dangerous water and someone throws us a life jacket and we say, "Oh, I don't want that," we have to go without the help we could have had.

President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., spoke of his feeling on the importance of spiritual learning:

There is spiritual learning just as there is material learning, and the one without the other is not complete; yet, speaking for myself, if I could have only one sort of learning, that which I would take would be the learning of the spirit, because in the hereafter I shall have opportunity in the eternities which are to come to get the other, and without spiritual learning here my handicaps in the hereafter would be all but overwhelming. [CR, April 1934, p. 94]

And President Kimball made it marvelously clear when he said:

The secular knowledge is to be desired; the spiritual knowledge is a necessity. We shall use all of the accumulated secular knowledge in order to create worlds and furnish them, but only through the mysteries of God and these hidden treasures of knowledge will we arrive at the place and condition where we may use that knowledge in creation and exaltation. [Faith Precedes the Miracle, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), p. 280]

I think we should understand that individuals must shoulder the responsibility for their own preparedness and for their own acquisition of knowledge and of skills and service. We just cannot sluff that off onto anyone else. We as individuals have to take that responsibility ourselves. We should understand that the scriptures are given to us by divine revelation for our guidance and learning, that spirituality is not obtained through intellect alone but through prayer and through obedience to the commandments of the gospel, and that in times of trial we are sustained by our spirituality, not by our intellect. I remember some years ago when a prominent professor in sciences suffered the loss of his son and his wife because of leukemia. It was not his excellent training in physics that sustained him through that experience with death and loss. It was the spiritual progress that he had made through the years. It was the testimony of eternal truths that sustained him. He had acquired those things by obedience to the gospel, by study of the scriptures, and by his activity in the Church. Then when the day of trial came, he was not left entirely alone.

I would like to mention one other thing concerning Joseph Smith's work with the Bible. Occasionally people say to me, "Well, wasn't Joseph Smith just Mormonizing the Bible?" I have never heard that term; I never would have thought of it on my own. But I guess what they mean by that is "Wasn't he just going through the Bible, changing the words

so that they will agree with Mormon doctrine?" And my answer to that is: "No, that is not what Joseph Smith was doing. He was not 'Mormonizing' the Bible, and to harbor that point of view is to miss the real important thing about what he was doing."

It appears to me from what I have been able to learn in my association with the inspired version that the Lord had Joseph Smith make a translation of the Bible because of the good it would do Joseph Smith as well as the good it would also do the Church. This was the way in which the Prophet Joseph Smith learned many things about the gospel. He did not read through the Bible looking for errors, looking for ways to correct it. He studied the scripture for what he could gain. Then when it was inadequate, either because of loss of material or because of faulty translation, by inquiring of the Lord and studying and pondering and thinking about it, he was able to perceive by revelation what the intention of that passage really was. And thus there came to him knowledge which he did not possess before he made the translation. We can all gain a lesson from that in our own scripture study. We do not search the scriptures because we already know; we read the scriptures so that we can learn things and comprehend them and so that we can be built up spiritually. And that was the same experience the Prophet Joseph Smith had.

We have mentioned things today concerning salvation. I'd like to read another statement about it. I wrote it for this occasion:

The salvation spoken of in the scriptures is not simply an acquisition of knowledge, of manners, and of learned responses. It is not just a coating of polish and veneer of sophistication. It involves some of that, but the salvation that comes through Jesus Christ is much more. It includes a mighty change in the heart, a cleansing from past sins, a baptism by the Holy Ghost and of fire, and, if you will, a sanctification of the very tissues of our bodies. Salvation involves being born again, becoming a new creature

in Jesus Christ, having the dross purged by the Holy Ghost, and having an eye single to the glory of God. Intellectual attainment is an aid to salvation, but it will not sufficiently change the heart of man. It takes the Spirit of God speaking to man's spirit to give it a testimony and to cleanse and change a person from a natural man into a saint. Salvation is brought about by faith in Jesus Christ, by baptism in water, by keeping the commandments, and by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Salvation encompasses every aspect of life—social, spiritual, physical, economic, intellectual, and emotional. For these reasons we understand that the gospel of Jesus Christ is more than a system of ethics, more than a social order, and more than a mental exercise. Without the divine birth of Jesus Christ, without his sinless life, the shedding of his blood in Gethsemane, his death upon the cross, and his bodily, physical resurrection from the grave, there would have been no redemption from sin or death. Even if we had the same set of rules, even if we had the same set of ordinances and the same ethics that we now have, without the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, none of the other would bring about salvation. Nothing is more basic to the gospel than the fact of Jesus' atonement. He came to atone for the fall of Adam as well as for our personal sins. He paid for a broken law. Without that payment, nothing we could do would save us in this life or in the next. If Christ had not made the atonement, nothing that we would do would make up for the loss.

A few closing comments. The importance of searching the scriptures was the subject of an editorial in the *Deseret News*. It is dated 7 February 1852. Although the article is unsigned, the idea sounds very much like President Brigham Young. Listen to these words:

Some have supposed that it would make but little difference with them whether they learn much or little, whether they attain to all the intelligence within their reach or not while they tarry in this world, believing that if they paid their tithing, went

to meetings, said their prayers, and performed those things which are especially commanded, that it would be well with them and as soon as they laid off this mortal body, all would be well with them. This is a mistaken idea and that will cause every soul to mourn who embraces and practices upon it. When we arrive in the world of resurrected bodies, we will learn, to our sorrow [if we have not done what we should do] that God requires of us in this world not only obedience to his revealed will, but a searching after his purposes and plans.

What I'm trying to say today is this: in the revelations which the Lord has given to us, we ought to find the principles and the basic concepts that will enable us to establish our lives on a basis not only in spiritual things, but in all other things—secular, intellectual, all other areas. Using the scriptures as our basic source of truth, all other things that we do can be put in proper perspective. But if we go through this life doing only those things we are particularly commanded to do, we will probably not have the spiritual insight and understanding necessary to recognize God's purposes and plans. Elder John A. Widtsoe has said:

It is a paradox that men will gladly devote time every day for many years to learn a science or an art. And yet they expect to gain a knowledge of the gospel, which comprehends all sciences and all arts, through a perfunctory glance at books or an occasional listening to sermons.

I'll add the comment: We don't want to remain kindergartners in the gospel while we become Ph.D.'s in other subjects; in other words, we want to progress in the gospel at the same rate that we are progressing in other things.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said:

A fanciful and flowery and heated imagination beware of because the things of God are of deep import, and time and experience and careful and

ponderous thought and solemn thoughts can only find them out. [Teachings, p. 137]

President Hugh B. Brown said:

I am impressed with the testimony of a man who can stand and say he knows the gospel is true. What I would like to ask is, "But, sir, do you know the gospel?" I say it is one thing to know the gospel is true, and it is another thing to know what the gospel is. Mere testimony can be gained with but perfunctory knowledge of the Church and its teachings, as evidenced by the hundreds who are now coming into the Church with but bare acquaintanceship. But to retain a testimony, to be of service in building the Lord's kingdom, requires a serious study of the gospel and knowing what it is. [Personal correspondence, dated 28 January 1969]

President Spencer W. Kimball gave this counsel to seminary teachers:

I hope that you teachers will involve students heavily in scripture reading. I find that when I get causal in my relationship with divinity and when it seems that no divine ear is listening and no divine voice speaking, that I'm far, far away. If I immerse myself in the scriptures, the distance narrows and the spirituality returns. I find myself loving more intensely those whom I must love with all my heart and might and mind and strength. And loving them more, I find it easier to abide their counsel. We learn the lessons of life more readily and surely if we see the results of wickedness and righteousness in the lives of others. . . . All through the scriptures every weakness and strength of man has been portrayed, and rewards and punishments have been recorded. One would surely be blind who could not learn to live properly by such reading. [Address to seminary and institute personnel, Brigham Young University, July 11, 1966]

I live on a little one-acre farm about 7 miles north of here, and some time ago I was

planting a garden in an area that until then had been a hayfield. In preparing the soil for the first planting, I found hundreds of rocks about the size of my hand. Everyone knows that rocks are of no value in a vegetable garden, so I threw all the rocks out beyond the garden area. What was left was fine, powdered soil, easily worked and easily furrowed. After the seeds were planted, we needed to irrigate, so we made some long, straight rows of water ditches in between each of the rows of seeds. As the water came tumbling down through the main ditch and turned into the head of each row of the garden, I saw it wash away the finely powdered soil and do great damage to the rows of seeds. Do you know what I needed then more than anything else? I needed some rocks. I quickly got the hint that there is a proper place for the strength of a rock in a vegetable garden. I scrambled over the ground, gathering as fast as I could the rocks that I had once thrown away. They needed to be put at the head of each row to withstand the onslaught of the water. Through it all I began to see a need for proper balance in life. You need a garden; the garden needs water and soil and rocks, but they need to be in the proper place and in the proper proportion. If everything were a rock, nothing would grow. It is too rigid. But if there is no principle and no stability, and too much flexibility, everything will be washed away in the day of trouble. If we have an individual philosophy so bland that anything goes, we'll soon find that everything goes. I saw an application to life, and I recognized that in my own life I need conviction and testimony. Every organization that is to endure must have leaders that are like rocks, not easily moved, not washed away from their foundations. You know, we can't live on borrowed light. We must have within ourselves our own principles based on the gospel of Jesus Christ and a testimony that is born of the Spirit.

At Caesarea Philippi Jesus spoke to the Twelve and asked them, "Who do men say

that I am?" He did it in a most interesting way. First, he said, "Who do other people say that I the Son of man am?"

They replied, "Some think you're Elijah, and others think you're Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

Then he turned to the Twelve, and he asked, "Whom do you say that I am?" Can you see the Master Teacher teaching by contrast? "That's what they say; what do you say?"

Peter, speaking for the Twelve, said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus replied, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona. You say I am Christ. I say you are Peter. Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but your Father which is in heaven, and upon this rock, I will build my church" (see Matthew 16:17-18).

We understand that rock to be the rock of revelation. And when you actually go to the place where that was done, where that conversion took place, you get the message even more clearly. It is a very impressive place. The area near Caesarea Philippi consists of huge outcroppings of stone. It is rock upon rock. There are rocks as big as houses there. Can you see Jesus and the Twelve in that circumstance and Jesus teaching them, "Upon this rock of revelation I will build my church"? They couldn't have missed the message. You can get it from the scriptures, but you get an additional dimension when you stand in that place in the presence of those big rocks.

I certainly appreciate the confidence which the university administration and the Board of

Trustees have placed in me to honor me with the position of dean of Religious Instruction. I hope what I have said today has touched the heart of each of us that we might realize the place that the gospel has in the large area of our lives, that we might know why religion is required at BYU, why it is helpful to us (whether it is required or not) to become acquainted with the scriptures and to search out the eternal truths.

I am thankful for a testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I know those things that are taught in the scriptures and by the Brethren are true. I am grateful for that knowledge.

Joseph Smith said in substance: "It is one thing to know there is a heaven; it is another thing to have the Lord tell you that you are going there" (see *Teachings*, p. 306). And that's the way I feel at this point: there's no question in my mind that the gospel is true, that there is a heaven, and that Jesus is the Christ. I have the knowledge not just through study but through the whisperings and the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. And now I pray that we might all live in such a manner that we might use the opportunities that are now before us and that we might rise to a level of spirituality where we comprehend all truth about all things because of the revelations of the Lord. May we find ourselves saved in every way in the celestial kingdom in the presence of our God and our Savior. For this I pray and express my gratitude for the opportunity of living now when the gospel is here, and I do it in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.