

**General Session of Stake Conference**  
**Sunday 19 March 2017**  
**President Esplin**

- **No Better way to invite the spirit than talking of Savior (like we did last night) and hearing our children sing.**
- **I would like to invite the Primary to stand and sing under the direction of Sister Karen McCleary and Bro Derek Brown.**
  - **I love to see the temple**
  - **The hearts of the Children**
- **I can't see the Jr Primary children (3 to 8 years old) Stand up on your chairs (have your parents hold on to you).**
  
- **I would also like to invite Mikayla Hogan a 13 year old Beehive from the 2<sup>nd</sup> ward to join me on the stand to share an experience she had – after the primary sings.**

- **“The Hearts of the Children”**

“The Hearts of the Children, turn to their fathers  
Malachi prophesied the hearts shall turn  
Elijah fulfilled the prophecy.  
And families can be sealed for eternity.”

- It comes from Malachi 4:5-6 The last versus of the Old Testament
- My wife Kaye is taking a Biblical Hebrew class – tells me Malachi means ‘My Messenger’ – the same Hebrew word for angel.

- Malachi 4:5-6 -

5 ¶ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:  
6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

- Most important scripture of the restoration.
- Included in all 5 standard works , OT, NT, BofM, PofGP, D&C
- Joseph Smith taught it more than any other scripture.
  
- First Vision
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Vision was deeply personal witness. Seeking reconciliation to God. Seeking his own salvation.
  - There was nothing about his calling as a Prophet or a church he would be instrumental in restoring.
    - He may not have even told his parents initially. “I went home, and as I leaned up to the fireplace, mother inquired what the matter was. I replied “never mind, all is well – I am well enough off”. I then said to my mother, “I have learned for myself that Presbyterianism is not true.”
    - However his Mother and sisters join Presbyterian Church soon after.
    - 5 min video on LDS.org – from 9 accounts.

- Joseph didn't write it down for 12 years (1832) and the edition we have in the JSH is an 1838 account published in 1841. Missionaries didn't teach it – it was the Book of Mormon.
- Moroni's Visitation 3 ½ years later – 17 year old Joseph is again concerned about his standing before god
  - Family living in a log cabin.
  - Moroni appears – approx. Midnight to 6 am (heard rooster crow) 3 times for 2 hours.
    - Called him by name
    - Said he was sent from the presence of God
    - God had a work for him to do
    - My name would be had for good & evil
    - Record on plates of gold (plates of brass not brass plates – Hebrew phrase)
    - Instrument was prepared for translating of the book.
      - *As a side note:*
      - *4 years later (1827) Joseph on day he got plates:*
      - *Everyone uneasy – 1826 – ultimatum, last chance*
      - *“Do not be uneasy, mother, all is right – see here, I have got a key” puts into her hands a cloth that contained 2 flat stones.*
      - *To Joseph Knight JS puts his head in hands acting like disappointed. “It is 10x better, I can see anything, they are marvelous.”*
- Back to 1823 Moroni 1<sup>st</sup> visitation -
- Moroni rivets his attention - He was able to focus on Moroni's words and described it as everything else fell away and nothing else in his consciousness
  - Joseph can remember details and even the variation of words from each visit.
- Wheat harvest – Alvin and Joseph Smith Sr. sends home to rest.
- Faints while climbing over a fence under an apple tree – 2 more hours of Moroni. Meet me at the Hill.
  - Lucy Addis: The Angel asked “Why didn't you tell your father”? Joseph told him he “was worried he wouldn't believe me”.
  - “He will believe every word that you say”
- Moroni quotes OT and NT scriptures regarding the restoration and gathering of Israel from Malachi Isaiah, Acts and Joel.
  - Malachi is quoted differently”

*Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.*

*And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.*

- Elijah will **plant** in the hearts of the children the promises made to their fathers.
- Hearts of the children shall **turn** to their Fathers.
- IT didn't say the Fathers hearts would turn to children like our OT.
- **Elijah**
  - We learn of Elijah when Baal becomes the State Religion of Israel under Ahab and Jezebel.
    - Baal is the Storm and rain God of Canaan
    - Low moral standard but tied to agriculture
  - He seals the heavens in 1 Kings 17 there “shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word”. (3 1/2 year famine) only 7,000 faithful in all Israel

- Feed bread and meat by ravens morning and evening. Water from a brook.
  - When brook dries up – Lord leads him to a Gentile Widow living in a city named Zarephath in modern Lebanon.
    - “Fetch me I pray thee a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. Bring me I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.”
    - She responds “I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and behold, I am gathering 2 sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son that we may eat it and die.”
    - Elijah said “Fear not, ...make me thereof a little cake first....For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, the Barrel of meal shall not waste...”
    - She went and did accordingly and the barrel of meal did not waste and the cruse of oil did not fail.
    - Elijah brings her son back to life - later
  - Elijah’s ministry and life shows great power – challenging the 850 Priests of Baal on Mt Carmel.
  - Goes to Mount Sinai – wants to die (1Kings 19:11)
- And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake:
- And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.
  - Jehovah teaches him – maybe the spirit is a better way to change hearts.
- **Prophet Joseph Smith was commanded to build a temple in 1833**
  - D&C 95:8 – “I gave unto you a commandment to build a house in the which I design to endow those whom I have chosen with Power from on High”.
  - Architecture was shown in vision to 3 men. One of the men – Fredrick G Williams said:
 

“We went upon our knees, called upon the Lord, and the building appeared within viewing distance, I being the first to discover it. Then all of us viewed it together. After we had taken a good look at the exterior, the building seemed to come right over us.. “

“The finished building seemed to coincide with that I there saw to a minutia” Fedrick G Williams.

- March 27<sup>th</sup> 1836 Dedication of the Kirtland Temple - Palm Sunday
  - “It may be rehearsed but mortal words can’t describe it” Eliza R Snow
  - 7:00 am 500 people waiting at the doors of the temple
  - 8:00 am Doors open – Joseph, Oliver and Sidney help seat the congregation
  - 9:00 am Joseph Smith on the Stand – begins
    - Hymns including “Now Let us Rejoice” by WW Phelps
      - *Written after 1833 mobs forced saints from homes in Jackson Count. November – huddled on banks of Missouri River – freezing and terrified. Homes burn.*
      - *Nov 12 Mob assembled for slaughter – 10 pm meteor shower signs and wonders – not forsaken*
      - *4 am Joseph Smith observes in Kirtland*
      - *Leonid Meteor showers every 33 years 100,000 meteors per hour.*
      - *Gives them hope!*
  - Sidney Rigdon Speaks for 2 hours – Foxes have holes, birds have nests but son of man has no place to lay his head... (Would want to sing “Now Let us Rejoice” – hard benches)
  - Joseph Smith is presented and sustained as Prophet Seer Revelator and Translator.
  - 20 min Intermission

- Joseph Smith Offers dedicatory Prayer – D&C 109 (hands toward heaven)
- Spirit of God – Hymn
- Sacrament passed
- Sidney Rigdon Prayer
- 4:00 pm Hosanna Shout
- 1 week later on April 3<sup>rd</sup> 1836 Easter Sunday
  - 1,000 people waiting for doors to be opened for another meeting
  - Joseph, Oliver and Sidney assist in seating congregation
  - Speakers – Thomas B Marsh and David W Patton
  - 20 min Intermission
  - Joseph Smith blesses sacrament / 12 Apostles pass
  - Joseph and Oliver retire to the west side Melch pulpit – separated from congregation by curtains
  - Pray to thank the Lord for the outpouring of the spirit
    - Christ,
    - Moses – Keys of Gathering of Israel Preach the Gospel (maybe Preach Gospel)
    - Elias – Keys of Dispensation of the gospel of Abraham (Maybe Perfect Saints)
    - Elijah – Turn the hearts of the children... (Maybe redeem the dead)
- April 3<sup>rd</sup> was also Passover
  - Tradition In Judaism– an empty place setting for Elijah the prophet./ Leave the door ajar.
    - Practiced today.
  - Last Supper – the last meal of Savior, but also last Passover Seder
    - Upper room – an empty setting for Elijah
    - Weekly – as we commemorate the Last Supper – in Sacrament meeting, do we save a place for Elijah?
      - Elder Oaks – we renew all covenants with Sacrament, not just Baptismal covenants.
      - Hearts are turned to Fathers.
- Joseph Smith Said while speaking of Malachi 4:-5-6
  - “How is this to be fulfilled? The keys are to be delivered; the spirit of Elijah is to come, the Gospel to be established, the saints of God gathered, Zion built up, and the Saints to come up as saviors on Mount Zion. But how? By building their temples.”
  - Elijah’s keys weren’t completely exercised for another 8 years when the Endowment was revealed to Joseph and the Nauvoo Temple was constructed.
- Great promises have been made for those who assist in this great work.
  - Elder Bednar
    - “As you respond in faith to this invitation... I promise you will be protected against the intensifying influence of the adversary...”
  - Elder Scott
    - “Immerse yourself in searching for your ancestors... I can think of no greater protection from the influence of the adversary in your life”
  - Elder Anderson
    - “As you accept this challenge...you will feel purpose and strength that will help you to avoid the temptations that surround you...”
    - “I want to challenge each of you to set a personal goal to help prepare as many names for the temple as baptisms you perform in the temple”
  - Elder Cook
    - Don’t underestimate the influence of the deceased in assisting your efforts and the joy ultimately of those you serve”
- Challenge:
  - To the Senior Primary

- “become actively involved in family history work by doing any or all of the following:
      - Complete the My family booklet
      - Add a story to family search
      - Find at least one name.
    - To the YM and YW (12 to 18) and all adults
      - Find at least one ancestral name and take it to the temple this year.
- **My Family**
  - I have seen these promises fulfilled in my family.
  - I have a sweet daughter that struggles with chronic and constant pain, discomfort from an injury.
  - Active participation in family history has strengthened her
  - She has felt closer to her family and her ancestors
  - Last night she expressed a feeling that ancestors strengthened her in difficult moments.
  - This week as I walked into the temple as stopped at the prayer roll (I worry about all my kids all the time) I looked at the family name I was taking with her name on it as the preparer. Surely those on the other side are aware of our prayers and needs.
  - A heart turned to this father and great grand fathers. Because of her work.
- **Elder M Russell Ballard’s Great Grand Father told at Roots tech Conf - a few weeks ago.**
  - The Logan Temple was under construction.
  - Bishop Henry Ballard of the Logan 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward and his wife made every effort to obtain info on their kindred dead. They prayed for help that the Lord would open the way for them to get such information.
  - **On May 17, 1884 Bishop Ballard** was busy interviewing members and writing recommends - when his young daughter, Ellen, delivered him a newspaper.
  - The Newspaper was the Newbury Weekly News, which was published in his birthplace of Newbury, Berkshire, England. The papers date – **May 15, 1884**, printed only 3 days earlier.
  - At the time, a typical trip across the ocean, then the plains took weeks.
  - Bishop Ballard’s young daughter explained that she had been playing on the sidewalk when 2 strangers handed her the paper and gave strict instructions that she deliver it to no one except her father.
  - Upon inspection, Bishop Ballard found the newspaper to contain a full page story devoted to an old cemetery the reporter had visited while on vacation where the Ballard family had been buried for generations. He included in the article **60 names found** on tombstones including dates, births, deaths.
  - The next days, Bishop Ballard sought an explanation from the Temple President – President Merrill. He said: “Brother Ballard, someone on the other side is anxious for their work to be done and they knew that you would do it if this paper got into your hands.” It was later determined that most of the people named in the newspaper were related to the Ballard Family.
  - A half century later, **Young M Russell Ballard** while serving a mission in England visited the offices of the Newbury Weekly News and took a picture of the 15 May 1884 edition.
  - Elder Ballard concludes: “For the Ballard Family, this story I’ve shared with you and my personal experience of seeing the newspaper convinces me without reservation or question along with many other experiences...that it is true those on the other side of the veil are very much interested in what we are doing and can do, as we carry on this glorious and wonderful work”
- **Lydia Oborn Poulter – Kaye’s great grand mother records**
  - Born in Bristol England –
  - After her family was converted and baptized by Missionaries in 1881 – “Her fathers greatest desire was to come to Utah and go to the house of the Lord and have the family united for all time and eternity. “
  - Like so many saints, they said goodbye to loved ones never to see them again and gathered with the saints in Utah.
  - Just prior to their departure her brother John died in Bristol at age 18.

- They sailed on the Ship Wyoming from Liverpool on 2 September 1882 and arrived in Ogden 18 days later.
  - The whole family was re baptized in the Ogden River before going to the Temple as was the custom in those days.
  - “On 3 June 1886, they went to the Logan temple where the sealing was performed. Soon after this, one night Mother heard a voice call “Mother, Mother”. When it came a second night she said to Father “Are you sure John’s name was on the list and sealed to us?” for she recognized his voice.
  - After reviewing the record they found his name was left off – so they immediately had him sealed to them.
  - Can you imagine hearing the voice of your 18 year old son that you missed and yearned to hear again?
- **I received a heart felt letter** from a dear friend that expressed deep sadness because of a child that had decided to not attend church. I shared with him this Elder Packer quote that I believe is consistent with the teachings the Prophet Joseph Smith gave in in last few months of life.
    - “It is a great challenge to raise a family in the darkening mists of our moral environment.
    - We emphasize that the greatest work you will do, will be within the walls of your own home, and that “no other success can compensate for failure in the home”. The measure of our success as parents, however, will not rest solely on how our children turn out. That judgment would be just only if we could raise our families in a perfectly moral environment, and that is now not possible.
    - It is not uncommon for responsible parents to lose one of their children, for a time, to influences over which they have no control. They agonize over rebellious sons and daughters. They are puzzled over why they are so helpless when they have tried so hard to do what they should.
    - It is my conviction that those wicked influences one day will be overruled... We cannot overemphasize the value of temple marriage, the binding ties of the sealing ordinance, and the standards of worthiness required of them. When parents keep the covenants they have made at the altar of the temple, their children will be forever bound to them.” Boyd K Packer Ensign
- **Forgiving one another is part of turning our hearts to our fathers.**
    - Years ago a Sister in the Stake named **Jan** told me this very tender story. I have received her permission to tell it.
    - Jan had spent most of her life married and divorced a few years before I met her.
    - It was a bitter break up and because of financial issues – the divorce took 1 ½ years to finalize
    - Wasn’t too long after the divorce was finalized – she heard her ex husband had remarried – which added to her pain.
    - About this same time –Jan’s daughter living in NY working in musical theater industry, was given a major role in a national tour company that would be traveling throughout the west. Family decided to all meet and attend a performance in Phoenix, AZ.
    - Jan realized that her ex-husband would be bringing his new wife to Phoenix and knew it could be very awkward. She dreaded the encounter.
    - Weeks before trip – Jan prayed, fasted and pleaded with the Lord that the initial meeting wouldn’t be unpleasant and detract from the family reunion.
    - She had no idea how she would react to her ex-husband with his new wife.
    - The answer to her prayer came in an unusual way:
    - Several nights before leaving for Phoenix, Jan had a dream:
      - In the dream she was in a theater venue, and she was waking up to the ticket counter to get the complimentary tickets her daughter was providing everyone.
      - There, standing at the ticket counter, was her ex husband.
      - Words came immediately to her mouth and she called him by name and said “How are you doing”?
      - Her ex-husband was a bit surprised and responded, “I’m doing OK”
      - Then Jan asked, “Where is your wife, I’d like to meet her”.

- He replied that she was talking to a family member. In her dream, Jan turned and walked right over to her and said “I’m Jan and it is so nice to meet you” and gave her a hug.
- Jan said that in the embrace, all the hurt, anger and ice in her heart melted away! Then she woke up and knew it was an answer to her prayers.
- Days later, when Jan showed up for the performance, she found that the auditorium was the very same one she had seen in her dream, and in fact her ex-husband was in line at the ticket counter.
- The dream had shown her exactly what to do and say and as a result, it played out precisely how she had seen it days before.
- After the Performance Jan turned around to her ex-husband and he held up his hand for a ‘high-5’ and said to Jan “We did it partner”!
- The family even went to dinner together that evening and all sat around and enjoyed being reunited. Jan found that she hit it off with her ex-husband’s new wife as they sat across the table from each other.
- On the flight home, Jan read a letter from her daughter that had been slipped into her purse. The letter was a tender note of gratitude.
- Jan’s daughter had also worried that the family reunion would be a disaster and in the letter she expressed her love and thankfulness to her mother for setting a wonderful tone – a tone for the family that would be the pattern for the rest of their lives. Jan wept as she read the letter.
- Jan concluded with “This is the way the Savior wants us to be; kind and loving in our families no matter the circumstances. Forgiveness and love were the only way. This was a time in my life when I knew without any question that Heavenly Father loved me and that he knew who I was and that experience was a gift from Him.” I fasted and prayed and the Lord did the rest!”
- **Brother and Sisters the Lord’s hand is in this work of families.**
- **Hearts must be turned to Fathers.**
- **Maybe the Savior’s return will be delayed until it is accomplished.**
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#### Revelations 7:

1 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

#### Revelations 13:

16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

#### Ancient Practice in Roman Empire:

- Brand slaves with marks on palms of right hand and forehead (impossible to hide) so they wouldn’t run away and act as freemen.
- Worshipers of Roman Gods mark on forehead or hand with symbol of God they followed.