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COMMANDMENTS, CALAMITIES, and the SECOND COMING

The power to avoid the “great judgments” that are coming upon the earth came through the priesthood keys that Elijah helped restore to the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple.

On Sunday, August 28, 2005, I was in Houston, Texas, USA, on a Church assignment. Upon returning to my hotel that night, I found the parking lot filled with cars with Louisiana license plates. In the lobby, many guests of the hotel were talking with some anxiety about a hurricane approaching the Gulf Coast of the United States.

Early the next morning, I flew from Houston to Atlanta.

Prior to departure, I watched television monitors in the gate area broadcasting news reports of



the expected landfall of what was characterized as a monstrous storm.

During my flight east, I observed that the entire southern horizon was consumed by a dark, menacing storm front. Although I was more than a little troubled by the enormity of the storm, I did not appreciate its ferocity until images of Hurricane Katrina's impact began to appear in the news media.

A week later, President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve visited Hurricane Katrina survivors. I will never forget their observations. They reported that the overriding concern of the people was not the loss of their material things but the loss of connection to family members.

"The thing that kept going through my mind everywhere we were was the children," President Packer said. "They don't understand, and can't understand, what has happened. And then there were the mothers with their little children; in many cases, the men were not there."

Elder Ballard added: "One of the things that was so heart wrenching were the people trying to get in touch with their own, people trying to find their families—their parents, children, siblings, cousins, grandparents, aunts and uncles. They were just trying to make some connection."¹

These observations, coupled with an assignment I received to assist in locating displaced Church members and their families in the Houston area, gave me a vision of the anguish that awaits those who may lose their families

in the eternities as a result of the storms of mortality. In the last days, the storms of mortality seem to be particularly intense and seem to be gathering in scope and fury. Latter-day conditions were foreseen to come upon mankind "as a whirlwind" (D&C 112:24), to be vexatious (see D&C 97:23), perilous (see 2 Timothy 3:1), and calamitous (see D&C 1:17; 45:50; 136:35), and to "not be stayed until the Lord come" (D&C 97:23). With no one knowing when the Lord will come (see Matthew 24:36; D&C 39:21; 49:7), and with all people enduring such difficult conditions, it is no wonder that the Lord's disciples "were troubled" (D&C 45:34) after hearing of such conditions prior to His Second Coming.

Ancient prophets who foresaw the last days also seemed to have been troubled. Referring to the Lord's latter-day coming, Joel asked, "Who can abide it?" (Joel 2:11). Similarly, Malachi exclaimed: "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" (Malachi 3:2; see also 3 Nephi 24:2; D&C 128:24). And after seeing the signs of the last days, John the Beloved cried out, "The great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Revelation 6:17).² These are expressions of concern about the ability of people to endure the calamities and perils of the last days. Fortunately, the Father and the Son have addressed these prophetic concerns.

Preparing for the Future

"Knowing the calamity" that was coming, the Father and the Son called upon the Prophet Joseph Smith and gave him—and through him, the rest of us—commandments



(D&C 1:17). Perhaps the most important commandment was given by the Father when He and the Son appeared to Joseph Smith in the spring of 1820. Referring to His Son, the Father commanded Joseph, “Hear Him!” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17; see also Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35). On that day and thereafter, Jesus Christ gave Joseph doctrines, covenants, and commandments to “prepare [all people] for that which is to come” (D&C 1:12; see also D&C 133:10). Only by receiving such doctrines, covenants, and commandments can the world be properly prepared for the Lord’s coming and everything leading up to that event. “If ye are prepared,” the Lord has counseled, “ye shall not fear” (D&C 38:30).

Among the essential instructions given by the Lord to prepare for His coming is that we listen to and obey His voice. “Hearken and hear, O ye inhabitants of the earth . . . hear the voice of the Lord” (D&C 133:16). Significantly, “the voice of the Lord is unto all men” so that “all that will hear may hear” (D&C 1:2, 11). The Lord’s voice is manifest to us in various ways. It is manifest in the voice of His servants: “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38; see also D&C 133:8–10, 16, 36–38, 71).³ It is manifest in the administration of His Spirit: “My voice is Spirit” (D&C 88:66).⁴ In addition to His voice, manifestations in the commotions of the earth will be a witness of the warnings: “After your testimony cometh the testimony of earthquakes. . . . And . . . the testimony of the voice of thunderings, . . . lightnings, . . . tempests, and . . . waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds” (D&C 88:89–90).

Regardless of the form of the voice, the substance of the Lord’s message is the same. “Sanctify yourselves. . . . Go ye out from Babylon. . . . Hear the voice of the Lord; for he . . . commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (D&C 133:4, 5, 16). The call to repent and be sanctified is a call to prepare “to meet the Bridegroom” (D&C 133:10; see also D&C 133:19; 88:92; Matthew 25:1–13), who is Jesus Christ (see D&C 65:3). When the Lord returns, He “shall stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh” (D&C 133:25).⁵ To dwell with the Lord in that day, we must be clean, for no unclean thing can dwell in His presence (see 1 Nephi 10:21; 3 Nephi 27:19; Moses 6:57; 1 Corinthians 6:9; Ephesians 5:5).

Thus, there is no more essential preparation for the great day of the Lord than heeding His call to repent and be sanctified, which we cannot accomplish without baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost (see 3 Nephi 27:19–20).⁶

Standing in Holy Places

It is important that we not only leave Babylon but also that we remain worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost. “For the Spirit of the Lord will not always strive with man” (2 Nephi 26:11; see also D&C 1:33; 20:32; Moses 8:17). To ensure the continued companionship of the Holy Ghost, the faithful must “stand in holy places” (D&C 101:22). “Wherefore, stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come; for behold, it cometh quickly, saith the Lord” (D&C 87:8). The holy places where the faithful should stand are in the temples of the Lord. It is in such places that the power to overcome the world is delivered to them. The nature and significance of this power should not be underappreciated.

Three years following the First Vision, Joseph Smith received another heavenly messenger, Moroni (see Joseph Smith—History 1:27–48). His message included recitation of biblical prophecies concerning the latter-day coming of the Lord and the conditions leading up to His coming. Quoting Malachi, Moroni declared: “For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven,” leaving the proud and the wicked “neither root nor branch” (Joseph Smith—History 1:37). But “before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord,” Moroni continued, “I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet” (Joseph Smith—History 1:38). And Elijah “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” (Joseph Smith—History 1:39).

Clearly, Moroni’s message was important. He delivered it three times that night and once the next morning “without the least variation” (Joseph Smith—History 1:45). It was the first heavenly communication the Prophet Joseph Smith had received since the appearance of the Father and the Son,

which had initiated the work of the Restoration. The thrust of Moroni's message was that "great judgments . . . were coming upon the earth, with great desolations by famine, sword, and pestilence" (Joseph Smith—History 1:45) and that the power to avoid such judgments was coming in the priesthood keys that Elijah would help restore to the earth.

Thirteen years later, Elijah came as promised, bestowing upon Joseph in the Kirtland Temple the sealing power. By this power, "all covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations" have "efficacy, virtue, [and] force in and after the resurrection from the dead" (D&C 132:7). Without such power, every human undertaking has an end after death (see D&C 132:13–14). This, then, will be the great waste that awaits the world unless the children of men receive the sealing power that Elijah restored. It is not the physical destruction that accompanies war, pestilence, earthquake, and famine but rather that men and women will be left alone, without root (connection to ancestry) or branch (connection to posterity).

In conclusion, they who will endure the storms of the last days and will stand when the Lord appears are they who know and obey His voice. As the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith: "They . . . [who] have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but *shall abide the day*" (D&C 45:57; emphasis added). Such persons will have sanctified themselves

through receipt of the saving ordinances and obedience to the covenants associated with such ordinances, understanding that when the veil is rent and all men shall see Him, "he that is not purified *shall not abide the day*" (D&C 38:8; emphasis added). Such persons will be those who have availed themselves of the blessings of the temple and made such blessings available to their kindred dead (see D&C 128:24; Revelation 7:14–17).

May we do as the Lord has instructed so that we may be build on a solid foundation and endure successfully the raging storms of mortality (see Matthew 7:24–27; Helaman 5:12). ■

NOTES

1. "Church leaders tour devastation of three states," *Church News*, Sept. 10, 2005, 11.
2. The Lord posed a similar question to the people of our day: "Vengeance cometh speedily upon the ungodly as the whirlwind; and who shall escape it?" (D&C 97:22).
3. The voice of the Lord's servants includes the "elders of my church," who are sent unto the nations of the earth (D&C 133:8–10, 16, 36–38, 71).
4. As prophesied by Joel and affirmed on the day of Pentecost, the Lord's Spirit was poured out upon all nations (see Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17–18).
5. See also Zechariah 14:4 ("his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives"); Revelation 1:7 ("every eye shall see him"); D&C 38:8 ("day soon cometh that ye shall see me"); D&C 76:63 ("he shall come . . . to reign on the earth"); D&C 88:95 ("the face of the Lord shall be unveiled"); D&C 104:59 ("prepare my people for . . . when I shall dwell with them").
6. See also Moroni 10:32–33 (sanctified "by the grace of God"); D&C 88:21 (sanctified through obedience to "the law of Christ"); D&C 84:33 (sanctified through "magnifying their calling" in the priesthood).



Without the sealing power bestowed upon Joseph Smith by Elijah, every human undertaking has an end after death. This is the great waste that awaits the world unless the children of men receive the sealing power.