



Preparing for the Coming of Our Lord

“Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight, for the hour of his coming is nigh” (D&C 133:17).

From the Life of Joseph Fielding Smith

President Joseph Fielding Smith once told a group of Latter-day Saints that he was “praying for the end of the world.” He said, “If it came tomorrow I would be glad.” In response to that declaration, a woman spoke out, loudly enough for others to hear. “Oh, I hope not,” she said.

Sharing this experience some time later, President Smith taught:

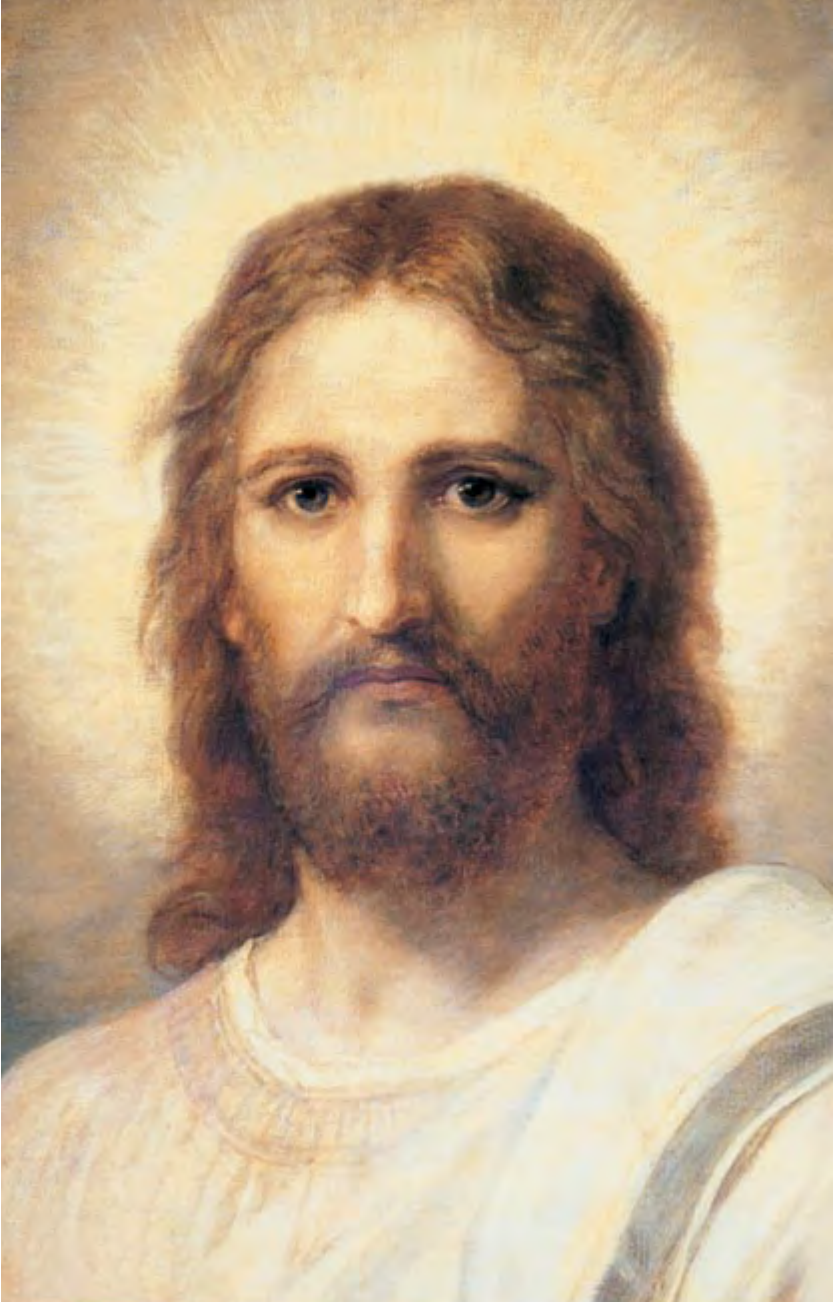
“Do you not want the end of the world to come?”

“Most people have the wrong idea of what is meant by the end of the world. . . .

“ . . . When Christ comes there will be an end to the world. . . . There will not be any war, any turmoil, envying, lying; there will be no wickedness. Men will learn then to love the Lord and keep His commandments, and if they don’t they will not stay here. That’s the end of the world, and that is what the Savior prayed for when His disciples came to Him and said, ‘Teach us to pray.’ What did He do? He taught them, ‘Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.’ [See Luke 11:1–2.]

“That’s what I’m praying for. The Lord was praying for the end of the world, and so am I.”¹

In sermons and writings, President Smith often quoted scriptural prophecies about the last days, the role of Joseph Smith in



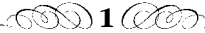
“We long for the day when the Prince of Peace shall come.”

preparing the way of the Lord, and the Savior's coming to the earth in glory. He expressed his deep feelings about these prophecies in the dedicatory prayer of the Ogden Utah Temple:

"As thou knowest, O our God, we are living in the last days when the signs of the times are being shown forth; when thou art hastening thy work in its time; and when we have already heard the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord and make his paths straight [see Matthew 3:3]. . . .

"O, our Father, we long for the day when the Prince of Peace shall come, when the earth shall rest and righteousness be found again upon her face; and it is our prayer, spoken out of humble and contrite hearts, that we shall abide the day and be found worthy to live with him whom thou hast appointed to stand as King of kings and Lord of lords, to whom be glory and honor and power and might both now and forever."²

Teachings of Joseph Fielding Smith



The coming of the Lord is near.

We are rapidly approaching the great day of the Lord, that time of "refreshing," when he will come in the clouds of heaven to take vengeance upon the ungodly and prepare the earth for the reign of peace for all those who are willing to abide in his law [see Acts 3:19–20].³

Many things have taken place . . . to impress faithful members of the Church with the fact that the coming of the Lord is near. The gospel has been restored. The Church has been fully organized. The priesthood has been conferred upon man. The various dispensations from the beginning have been revealed and their keys and authorities given to the Church. Israel has been and is being gathered to the land of Zion. The Jews are returning to Jerusalem. The gospel is being preached in all the world as a witness to every nation. Temples are being built, and ordinance work for the dead, as well as for the living, is performed in them. The hearts of the children have turned to their fathers, and the children are seeking after their dead. The covenants which the Lord promised to make

with Israel in the latter days have been revealed, and thousands of gathered Israel have entered into them. Thus the work of the Lord is advancing, and all these things are signs of the near approach of our Lord. . . .

The words of the prophets are rapidly being fulfilled, but it is done on such natural principles that most of us fail to see it.

Joel promised that the Lord would pour out his spirit upon all flesh: the sons and daughters should prophesy, old men should dream dreams, and young men should see visions [see Joel 2:28–29]. . . .

Among the signs of the last days was an increase of learning. Daniel was commanded to “. . . shut up the words, and seal the book [of his prophecy], even to the time of the end: [and in that day] many shall run to and fro,” said he “and knowledge shall be increased.” (Dan. 12:4.) Are not the people “running to and fro” today as they never did before in the history of the world? . . .

. . . Is not knowledge increased? Was there ever a time in the history of the world when so much knowledge was poured out upon the people? But sad to say, the words of Paul are true—the people are “ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (2 Tim. 3:7.) . . .

Have we not had numerous rumors of wars? [See D&C 45:26.] Have we not had wars, such wars as the world never saw before? Is there not today commotion among the nations, and are not their rulers troubled? Have not kingdoms been overturned and great changes been made among nations? The whole earth is in commotion. Earthquakes in divers places are reported every day [see D&C 45:33]. . . .

Yet the old world goes on about its business paying very little heed to all the Lord has said and to all the signs and indications that have been given. Men harden their hearts and say “. . . that Christ delayeth his coming until the end of the earth.” (D&C 45:26.)⁴

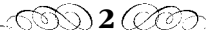
I was asked, not long ago, if I could tell when the Lord would come. I answered, “Yes,” and I answer “Yes” now. I know when he will come. He will come tomorrow. We have his word for it. Let me read it:

“Behold, now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man, and verily it is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people; for he that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming.”

Now there is a discourse sufficient on tithing.

“For after today cometh the burning—this is speaking after the manner of the Lord—for verily I say, tomorrow all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up, for I am the Lord of Hosts; and I will not spare any that remain in Babylon.” [D&C 64:23–24.]

So the Lord is coming, I say, tomorrow. Then let us be prepared.⁵



There will be a judgment when Christ comes.

The parable the Lord taught of the Wheat and the Tares had reference to the last days. According to the story a sower planted good seed in his field, but while he slept the enemy came and sowed tares in the field. When the blades began to show, the servants desired to go and pluck up the tares but the Lord commanded them to let both the wheat and the tares grow up together until the harvest was ripe, lest they root up the tender wheat while destroying the tares. Then at the end of the harvest, they were to go forth and gather the wheat and bind the tares to be burned. In the explanation of this parable, the Lord said to his disciples that “the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.” [See Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43; D&C 86.]⁶

The tares and the wheat are growing together and have been growing in the same field for all these years, but the day is near at hand when the wheat will be garnered, and the tares likewise will be gathered to be burned, and there will come a separation, the righteous from the wicked, and it behooves each one of us to keep the commandments of the Lord, to repent of our sins, to turn unto righteousness, if there is need of repentance in our hearts.⁷

Build up and strengthen the members of the Church in faith in God; goodness knows we need it. There are so many influences at work to divide us asunder, right among the members of the Church, and there is going to come, one of these days in the near future a



“We are rapidly approaching the great day of the Lord, that time of ‘refreshing,’ when he will come in the clouds of heaven.”

separation of the wheat from the tares, and we are either wheat or tares. We are going to be on one side or the other.⁸

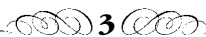
The day will come when we will not have *this* world. It will be changed. We will get a better world. We will get one that is righteous, because when Christ comes, he will cleanse the earth.

Read what is written in our scriptures. Read what he himself has said. When he comes, he will cleanse this earth from all its wickedness, and, speaking of the Church, he has said that he would send his angels and they would gather out of his kingdom, which is the Church, all things that offend [see Matthew 13:41].⁹

[The] great and dreadful day can be no other time but the coming of Jesus Christ to establish his kingdom in power among the righteous on the earth and to cleanse the earth from all iniquity. It will not be a day of fear and to cause dread in the hearts of the righteous, but it will be a great day of fear and terror to the ungodly. This we have learned from the words of our Savior himself, as he taught his disciples [see Matthew 24; Joseph Smith—Matthew 1].¹⁰

There shall be a judgment when Christ comes. We are informed that the books shall be opened, the dead shall be judged out of the things which are written in the books and among the books will be the book of life [see Revelation 20:12]. We shall see its pages. We shall see ourselves just as we are, and we are to understand with a righteous understanding that the judgments which are meted out to us are just and true, whether we come into the Kingdom of God, . . . to receive these glorious blessings or whether we are banished.¹¹

I plead with the Latter-day Saints to stand firm and faithful in the discharge of every duty, keeping the commandments of the Lord, honoring the priesthood, that we may stand when the Lord comes—whether we be living or dead, it matters not,—to be partakers of this glory.¹²



To prepare for the coming of the Lord, we need to watch and pray and get our houses in order.

There are many events in the world today which indicate that the great day of the Lord is drawing near when the Redeemer will again

appear to set up his kingdom in righteousness preparatory to the millennial reign. In the meantime it is the duty of members of the Church to seek for knowledge and to prepare themselves by study and by faith for the ushering in of that great and glorious day.¹³

We do not need to be worrying about the times and the seasons when Christ shall come, but we do need to watch and pray and be ready.¹⁴

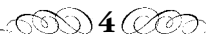
I get annoyed sometimes at some of our elders who when speaking, say the Lord will come when we all become righteous enough to receive him. The Lord is not going to wait for us to get righteous. When he gets ready to come he is going to come—when the cup of iniquity is full—and if we are not righteous then, it will be just too bad for us for we will be classed among the ungodly, and we will be as stubble to be swept off the face of the earth, for the Lord says wickedness shall not stand.¹⁵

Shall we slumber on in utter oblivion or indifference to all that the Lord has given us as warning? I say unto you, “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

“But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.” (Matt. 24:42–44.)

May we heed this warning given by the Lord and get our houses in order and be prepared for the coming of the Lord.¹⁶



**Latter-day Saints can be instruments in God's hands
to prepare a people for the Lord's coming.**

Would it not be an extraordinarily strange thing if the Lord should come and begin his reign of peace, take vengeance on the wicked, cleansing the earth from sin, and not send messengers to prepare the way before him? Should we expect the Lord to come to judge the world without first giving it warning and preparing the means of escape for all who will repent?



When the angel Moroni visited young Joseph Smith, he prophesied of the Savior's Second Coming (see Joseph Smith—History 1:36–41).

Noah was sent to the world to warn it of the flood. If the people had hearkened they would have escaped. Moses was sent to lead Israel into the promised land, to fulfil the promises made to Abraham. John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for the coming of Christ. In each instance the call came through the opening of the heavens. Isaiah, Jeremiah and other prophets, were sent to warn Israel and Judah before the scattering and captivity came upon them.

Had they given heed a different page of history would have been written. They had their chance to hear; they were warned and had the means of escape which they rejected.

The Lord promised to have the same interest in humanity preceding his second coming.¹⁷

Joseph Smith was sent to prepare the way for this second coming, by the proclamation of the fullness of the Gospel and the granting to all men the means of escape from iniquity and transgression.¹⁸

John on Patmos saw in vision in the last days an “angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue and people.” [Revelation 14:6.]

In fulfillment of this promise, Joseph Smith declared that Moroni, an ancient prophet on this continent, and now resurrected, taught him the gospel, giving him instruction in relation to the restoration of all things preceding the coming of Christ. And the Lord said: “For behold, the Lord God hath sent forth the angel crying through the midst of heaven, saying: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight, for the hour of his coming is nigh.” [D&C 133:17.]

Accepting this as true, Latter-day Saints believe that communication has been established with the heavens in modern times, and now the “Gospel of the Kingdom” is sent out as a witness to the world before Christ shall come [see Matthew 24:14].¹⁹

The Latter-day Saints may be considered strange and peculiar in believing that they have been called upon to fulfil this scripture [Matthew 24:14], but it is with full confidence that the Lord has spoken that they are diligently sending missionaries in to all parts of the earth. Moreover when all nations have heard this message as it has been revealed in these last days, then may we look forth for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for at that day all nations will have been warned by the messengers who were sent unto them according to the Lord’s promise.²⁰

The gospel is for all men, and the Church shall be established everywhere, in all nations, even to the ends of the earth, before the second coming of the Son of Man. . . .

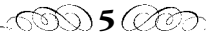
. . . He has set his hand the second time to gather Israel into the Church, and this time he will raise up congregations of his saints in all nations.²¹

From the dedicatory prayer for the Ogden Utah Temple:

O Father, hasten the day when righteousness shall prevail; when the rulers of nations shall open their borders to the preaching of the gospel; when the door of salvation shall swing wide open for the honest and upright and good among every people.

We pray for the spread of truth; we pray for the missionary cause; we seek strength and numbers and means to proclaim thy everlasting truths to more of thy other children in every nation, among every kindred, and speaking every tongue. . . .

. . . It is our desire to be instruments in thy hands to prepare a people for the coming of thy Son.²²



**The Millennium will be a time of peace and
a time to labor in the work of the Lord.**

The righteous will rejoice when he comes, because then peace will come to the earth, righteousness to the people, and that same spirit of peace and joy and happiness which prevailed upon this continent for two hundred years [see 4 Nephi 1:1–22] shall again be established among the people and eventually shall become universal, and Christ shall reign as Lord of lords and King of kings for a thousand years. We are looking forward to that time.²³

For one thousand years shall this happy time of peace prevail and in due time all the inhabitants of the earth shall be brought into the fold of the Church.²⁴

The gospel will be taught far more intensely and with greater power during [the] millennium, until all the inhabitants of the earth shall embrace it.²⁵

Instead of being a time of rest, the Millennium is to be a time for all to labor. Idleness will not be found, better methods will be employed, not so much time will be consumed in the daily pursuits and more time will be given to the things of the Kingdom. The saints will be kept busy in the temples which shall be built in all

parts of the land. In fact, so busy will they be that the temples will be occupied most of the time.²⁶

There shall be mortality upon the face of the earth during the thousand years because of the great work that is to be accomplished, of salvation for the dead. During that thousand years of peace the great work of the Lord shall be in the temples, and into those temples the people shall go to labor for those who have passed beyond and who are waiting to have these ordinances which pertain to their salvation performed for them by those who still dwell in mortality upon the earth.²⁷

It is our duty to save the dead and that work will continue during the Millennium until all are endowed and sealed who are entitled to this blessing.²⁸

All those who have died in Christ shall come forth from the dead, at His coming, and shall dwell upon the earth as Christ shall be upon the earth during the millennium. They shall not remain here all the time during the thousand years, but they will mingle with those who are still here in mortal life. These resurrected Saints, and the Savior Himself, shall come to give instruction and guidance; to reveal unto us the things we ought to know; to give us information concerning the work in the temples of the Lord so we may do the work which is essential to the salvation of worthy men.²⁹

The Lord has said through his servants that during the Millennium those who have passed beyond and have attained the resurrection will reveal in person to those who are still in mortality all the information which is required to complete the work of these who have passed from this life. Then the dead will have the privilege of making known the things they desire and are entitled to receive. In this way no soul will be neglected and the work of the Lord will be perfected.³⁰

I pray every day of my life that the Lord will hasten His work. . . . I am praying for the end of the world because I want a better world. I want the coming of Christ. I want the reign of peace. I want the time to come when every man can live in peace and in the spirit of faith, humility and prayer.³¹

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Questions

- How does the account in “From the Life of Joseph Fielding Smith” influence your feelings about the end of the world?
- How can the prophecies mentioned in section 1 help us prepare for the coming of the Lord?
- In section 2, review President Smith’s teachings about the parable of the wheat and the tares. What can we do to be part of the “wheat”? What can we do to help our families and others?
- As we prepare for the coming of the Lord, what do you think it means to “watch and pray”? What do you think it means to “get our houses in order”? (See section 3.)
- President Smith prayed, “It is our desire to be instruments in thy hands to prepare a people for the coming of thy Son” (section 4). In what ways can we help others prepare for the Lord’s coming?
- Review section 5. In what ways can we benefit now from knowing about what will happen in the Millennium?

Related Scriptures

Psalm 102:16; Isaiah 40:3–5; James 5:7–8; D&C 1:12; 39:20–21; 45:39, 56–59

Teaching Help

“The crowning, convincing, converting power of gospel teaching is manifest when an inspired teacher says, ‘I know by the power of the Holy Ghost, by the revelations of the Holy Spirit to my soul, that the doctrines I have taught are true’” (Bruce R. McConkie, in *Teaching, No Greater Call* [1999], 43).

Notes

1. *The Signs of the Times* (1943), 103–5.
2. “Ogden Temple Dedicatory Prayer,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1972, 10–11.
3. *The Restoration of All Things* (1945), 302.
4. In Conference Report, Apr. 1966, 12–14.
5. In Conference Report, Apr. 1935, 98; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, ed. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 3:1.
6. “Watch Therefore,” *Deseret News*, Aug. 2, 1941, Church section, 2; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:15.
7. In Conference Report, Apr. 1918, 156–57; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:15–16.
8. “How to Teach the Gospel at Home,” *Relief Society Magazine*, Dec. 1931, 688; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:16.

9. In Conference Report, Apr. 1952, 28; italics in original.
10. "The Coming of Elijah," *Ensign*, Jan. 1972, 5.
11. "The Reign of Righteousness," *Deseret News*, Jan. 7, 1933, 7; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:60.
12. In Conference Report, Apr. 1935, 99; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:38.
13. *Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., 5 vols. (1957–66), 5:xii.
14. "A Warning Cry for Repentance," *Deseret News*, May 4, 1935, Church section, 6.
15. "A Warning Cry for Repentance," 8.
16. In Conference Report, Apr. 1966, 15.
17. "A Peculiar People: Modern Revelation—The Coming of Moroni," *Deseret News*, June 6, 1931, Church section, 8; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:3–4.
18. "A Peculiar People: Prophecy Being Fulfilled," *Deseret News*, Sept. 19, 1931, Church section, 6.
19. "A Peculiar People: Modern Revelation—The Coming of Moroni," 8; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:4–5.
20. "A Peculiar People: Prophecy Being Fulfilled," *Deseret News*, Nov. 7, 1931, Church section, 6; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:6.
21. In Conference Report, British Area General Conference 1971, 176.
22. "Ogden Temple Dedicatory Prayer," 9, 11.
23. "The Right to Rule," *Deseret News*, Feb. 6, 1932, Church section, 8.
24. "Priesthood—Dispensation of the Fullness of Times," *Deseret News*, Aug. 19, 1933, 4; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:66.
25. "Churches on Earth During the Millennium," *Improvement Era*, Mar. 1955, 176; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:64.
26. *The Way to Perfection* (1931), 323–24.
27. "The Reign of Righteousness," 7; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:58.
28. In "Question Answered," *Deseret News*, Jan. 13, 1934, Church section, 8; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:166.
29. "The Reign of Righteousness," 7; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:59.
30. "Faith Leads to a Fulness of Truth and Righteousness," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Oct. 1930, 154; italics removed; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:65.
31. *The Signs of the Times*, 149.