

## Celebrating 200 Years

1805 ~ 2005

*Joseph Smith, Jr.*

7:30 p.m., 19 July, Kirtland Temple

<http://www.kirtlandtemple.org/hymns/>

### **Prelude**

### **Welcome**.....

### **Invocation**.....

### **Early Life**.....

Joseph Smith, Jr., was the fourth of ten children born to Joseph Smith, Sr. and Lucy Mack. In his own words:

I was born in the town of [S]haron in the [State] of Vermont[,] North America on the twenty third day of December AD 1805 of goodly Parents who spared no pains to instructing me in [the] christian religion.<sup>1</sup>

Raised in the midst of religious tension both in the area of New York and within his own family, Joseph, Jr., would eventually bring religious unity to his family. But it is the “revelment of God’s purposes through him, which has enriched the lives of untold millions throughout the world.”<sup>2</sup>

### **We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet**.....

The author of [the first] hymn, William Fowler, was born in Australia in 1830, the son of a British soldier and his wife. Within a few years of the family’s return to England, both his parents died, leaving William an orphan at the age of fourteen. In the winter of 1848, he became dissatisfied with his parents’ Methodist religion and accepted the invitation of a friend to attend the Latter Day Saint church in Sheffield, England. The next summer he was baptized. He was ordained a priest the following year and an elder in 1851. Although we do not know the exact circumstances of the writing of this hymn, it was probably written before 1863, when Fowler and his family sailed for America. He died only two years later...<sup>3</sup>

Little more is know of William Fowler but we open this evening with the grand old hymn he left to the Latter Day Saint movement in gratitude for prophetic ministry.

*Congregation sings “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet”*

### **Afar in Old Judea**.....

“We sing next a hymn that celebrates the search for the revelment of God’s truth throughout the ages and relates this search specifically to the birth of our movement.”<sup>4</sup>

Through the message of each stanza, the hymn speaks of “The Christ of Every Age” The third stanza in particular tells of Joseph’s first vision as a teenager. Concerned by religious strife

in his region and in quandary over which church to join. Joseph Smith knelt in prayer in a grove of woods near Palmyra, New York in 1820. Ultimately, Joseph would found the Church of Christ ten years later in upstate New York in April 1830. Joseph Smith and his growing band of followers had finally found a church that answered the deepest desires of their longings for spiritual peace and divine truth. The encounter with God in this vision, and the prayer and deliberation preceding it, would be a defining moment in Joseph's life.

The text of this next hymn was written by Roy Cheville in November 1953, for a series of meetings on the theme, "Quest for Christ." The author of the hymn text recalls the first night it was sung:

The Stone Church congregation [in Independence, Missouri] sang it "with spirit and with understanding." Youth and veterans of sixty to seventy years in the church joined in fervent singing...More than one said the rafters rang as they had scarcely rung before.<sup>5</sup>

May we ring the rafters once more as we celebrate the beginning of the Latter Day Saint movement.

*Congregation sings "Afar in Old Judea"*

***When Earth in Bondage Long Had Lain***.....

Joseph Smith writes in his 1832 history, "...I was twenty one years of age and in this year I was married to Emma Hale Daughter of [Isaac] Hale who lived in Harmony [Pennsylvania]...on the 18th [of] January AD. 1827. On the 22d day of Sept[ember] of this same year I obtained the plates..."<sup>6</sup>

The Doctrine and Covenants states, "that God does inspire men and call them to his holy work in this age and generation, as well as in generations of old."<sup>7</sup> The same section summarizes the content of the Book of Mormon as "a record of a fallen people, and the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, and the Jews also, which was given by inspiration."<sup>8</sup>

In 1830 the Grandin Book Company in Palmyra, New York published 5,000 copies of the translated Book of Mormon. Missionaries soon took the book West, to Ohio and the territories beyond.

The next hymn was written by Parley P. Pratt who became a convert to the church after reading a copy of the Book of Mormon. "It was the conversion of his friend, Sidney Rigdon, along with Rigdon's Disciples of Christ followers that began the work of the church in [Kirtland]."<sup>9</sup>

"Earth in Bondage Long Had Lain" tells of the missionary spirit of Parley Pratt and others who would double the size of the new church from 100 to 200 members with new converts in the Kirtland area. His "secure and confident faith in the power of the Restoration story is proclaimed in...[this] hymn."<sup>10</sup>

*Congregation sings "When Earth in Bondage Long Had Lain"*

***Redeemer of Israel***.....

While the headquarters of the church moved to Kirtland in 1831, there were also a large number of members in Missouri. On May 1, 1832 W. W. Phelps was given the task to "correct and print the hymns which had been selected by Emma Smith in fulfillment of the revelation."<sup>11</sup> The first issue of *The Evening and the Morning Star* came off Phelps' press in June. "Redeemer of Israel" was among the six hymns printed with this issue. Inspired by a Joseph Swain hymn, Phelps

rewrote the song capturing “both the excitement and struggles of the new movement,”<sup>12</sup> comparing the trials of the church to those of the ancient Hebrews.<sup>13</sup> “Redeemer of Israel” has since become the well-loved “song of the Saints.”

*Congregation sings “Redeemer of Israel”*

***Earth with Her Ten Thousand Flowers***.....

“Earth with Her Ten Thousand Flowers” speaks of God through nature. As Roy Cheville writes, nature was very much apart of the early movement:

“The initial revelation to Joseph Smith came in a grove near his home. The calling and ordination of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to the Aaronic priesthood took place in the woods by the Susquehanna River. The plates of the Book of Mormon were unearthed on a hillside. Many of the first meetings were in the open.”<sup>14</sup>

The beauty of the countryside around Kirtland and the gardens surrounding the Temple make it as appropriate to sing in this place as it was 170 years ago, when it was included in the first church hymnal.

The text has been traditionally ascribed to W.W. Phelps but was most likely written by Thomas L. Taylor and adapted by Phelps.<sup>15</sup> We will sing it to the tune “Toplady,” commonly associated with, “Rock of Ages.”

*Congregation sings “Earth with Her Ten Thousand Flowers”*

***Kirtland to Nauvoo***.....

In 1838 Joseph and Sidney left Kirtland after a financial crisis that led to schisms and contention within the movement. Many of the Kirtland Saints, including Joseph Smith and his family, gathered to Far West, Missouri. As before in Kirtland and Independence, Missouri, a city was laid out with a temple at its center. And as before, the Saints were not to find peace. Cultural, political, and religious differences escalated into violent conflict with neighbors. The church was caught up in a “war of extermination.” Only the surrender of Joseph and other church leaders prevented Missouri militiamen from destroying Far West and its inhabitants. Joseph was court martialed and sentenced to death. Alexander Doniphan recognized the proceedings as illegal and refused to allow the sentence to be carried out. Saved from death but not free, Joseph languished in the Liberty Jail while his followers fled to Illinois.

Joseph soon escaped and turned his attention once again to building God’s kingdom on earth. The physical expression of that kingdom would be Nauvoo, the city beautiful. It soon rivaled Chicago in size and yet another temple began to take form. And at the center of it all stood Joseph.

According to Joseph Smith’s biographer, Donna Hill, Joseph in Nauvoo would become “candidate for the [US Presidency]...mayor, judge of the municipal court, lieutenant general of the Nauvoo Legion, trustee-in-trust of the church, steamboat owner, real estate agent, husband...and leader of the earthly kingdom of God.”<sup>16</sup>

These many roles put Joseph in a position to make many enemies. Politicians were upset with the Saints’ tendency to vote as a block. Non-member neighbors were frightened of the Nauvoo Legion. Some church leaders were uncomfortable with Joseph’s evolving doctrinal teachings. In June of 1844 Joseph was summoned to Carthage, Illinois to answer charges related to the destruction of the Nauvoo Expositor.

### **A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief**.....

On June 27, 1844 inside Carthage jail, Joseph and his companions languished in the afternoon heat. John Taylor later recorded, “All of us felt... a remarkable depression of spirits. In consonance with those feelings I sang a song, that had lately been introduced into Nauvoo, entitled ‘A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief.’... After a lapse of some time, Brother Hyrum requested me again to sing that song. I replied, ‘Brother Hyrum, I do not feel like singing;’ when he remarked, ‘Oh, never mind; commence singing, and you will get the spirit of it.’ At his request I did so.”<sup>17</sup> Some time later, the mob stormed the jail and shot into a small room. When the fire and smoke subsided Joseph and Hyrum lay dead. Joseph’s body was brought back to Nauvoo in a “rough pine casket”<sup>18</sup> for a proper funeral. At the funeral Emma, the young widow “...sank upon [her husband’s] body. Suddenly her grief found vent, and sighs and groans and lamentations filled the room.”<sup>19</sup>

Please sing the first stanza as a congregation, and then Keith Norman will sing the remaining stanzas.

*1st stanza: Congregation; Remaining stanzas: Solo. “A Poor Wayfaring Man”*

### **Praise to the Man**.....

The next hymn was printed in the *Times and Seasons* one month after Joseph’s death.<sup>20</sup> It is a reaction to the loss of their beloved Joseph Smith and tells of a community still very much in mourning. John Taylor writes of their loss:

In the midst of our difficulties he was always the first in motion...our guide for things spiritual and temporal...as prophet he approached our God had obtained for us his will...now our prophet, our counselor, our general was gone. For all things pertaining to this world or the next, he had spoken for the last time on earth.<sup>21</sup>

Beneath the hymns’ words of victory and hope is a pervasive anger and a struggle to make sense of the prophet’s death. It is in this historical context that we sing the hymn tonight using both the unaltered words and the soaring, yet haunting, melody originally intended.<sup>22</sup>

*1st and 2nd stanzas: Choir, Congregation joins. “Praise to the Man”*

### **Unknown Grave**.....

Joseph’s head still carried a price in Missouri and the family worried that enemies might try to mutilate the bodies. The martyrs were buried in a secret spot that became known among church members as the unknown grave. As a result, the Smith children grew up not knowing where their father and uncle were buried until Emma was on her deathbed in 1879. Joseph’s youngest son, David Hyrum, born four-and-a-half months after his father was killed, wrote the following hymn text about the unknown grave:

There’s an unknown grave in a green lowly spot  
The form that it covers will ne’er be forgot.  
Where the haven trees spread and the wild locusts wave  
Their fragrant white blooms o’er the unknown grave.  
Over the unknown grave.

And near by its side does the wild rabbit tread,  
While over the bosom the wild thistles spread.  
As if in their kindness to guard and to save

From man's footstep intruding the unknown grave,  
Guarding the unknown grave.

...

The Prophet whose life was destroyed by his foes  
Sleeps now where no hand may disturb his repose.  
Till trumpets of God drown the notes of the wave  
And we see him arise from his unknown grave,  
God bless that unknown grave.

...<sup>23</sup>

### **Onward to Zion** .....

161 years have passed since the death of Joseph Smith, Jr. Today his legacy lives on through the many denominations that trace their roots back to the young prophet. In their diversity, these denominations reflect the complex and, at times, controversial figure that was Joseph Smith. Amid differences, the call to faithful service and the call to build Zion remain dear to the heart of every Latter Day Saint.

F. M. Smith, a grandson of Joseph, Jr., formulated the words for "Onward to Zion" as a reminder of what is ultimately important. Although simple, the text is an appeal to all the saints who would seek to serve diligently in the cause of Zion. I invite each of you to raise your voice now in song, with the same zeal that compelled the early saints as they strove to build Zion.

*Congregation sings "Onward to Zion"*

### **The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning** .....

We end tonight with a hymn that grew out of the Pentecostal experiences here in Kirtland. "Tongues, visions, and prophecies were enjoyed on several occasions; in one particular quorum session, those attending reported 'a great flow of the Holy Spirit...like fire in their bones, so that they could not hold their peace, but were constrained to cry hosannah to God and the Lamb and glory in the highest.'<sup>24</sup> With his poetic gifts, W. W. Phelps formulated the words of a hymn that caught up the powerful spirit of this remarkable period."<sup>25</sup>

Join us as we sing one of the most beloved hymns of the Latter Day Saint tradition. I invite you to stand for the hymn and the benediction following.

*Congregation sings "The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning"*

*David Bolton on Trumpet*

### **Benediction** .....

### **Postlude**

---

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Smith, History, 1832, Joseph Smith Letterbook, 1:1-6, Joseph Smith Papers, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah; quoted in Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents* 1 (Salt Lake City, Signature Books: 1996), 26-27.

---

<sup>2</sup> Richard Clothier, "Celebrating the Bicentennial of the Birth of Joseph Smith, Jr., and Central Tenets of His Message: A Festival of Hymns and Heritage,"

[http://www.cofchrist.org/worship/Year\\_A/SpecialServices.asp?pr=yes](http://www.cofchrist.org/worship/Year_A/SpecialServices.asp?pr=yes) (Visited: 7 June 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Roy A. Cheville, *They Sang of the Restoration: Stories of Latter Day Saint Hymns* (Independence, Missouri: Herald House, 1955), 220.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, *History*, 1832; Vogel, 30.

<sup>7</sup> Doctrine Covenants (Community of Christ), 17:2f; D&C (LDS), 20.

<sup>8</sup> D&C (Community of Christ), 17:2d; D&C (LDS), 20.

<sup>9</sup> Clothier, "Celebrating the Bicentennial."

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Smith, B. H. Roberts, ed., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1974) 1:270.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Clothier, "The Singing Saints: A Festival of Hymns and History," for meeting during John Whitmer Historical Association, 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Cheville, 33.

<sup>14</sup> Cheville, 41.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Hicks, "Poetic Borrowing in Early Mormonism," *Dialogue: Journal of Mormon Thought* 18 (Spring 1985), 135.

<sup>16</sup> Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (Salt Lake City, Signature Books, 1977), 387.

<sup>17</sup> Smith, *History of the Church*, 7:101-102, from Clothier, "The Singing Saints."

<sup>18</sup> Newell, *Mormon Enigma*, 196.

<sup>19</sup> B. W. Richmond's statement, "The Prophet's Death!" *Deseret News* (27 November 1875) reprinted from the *Chicago Times*. Quoted in Newell, *Mormon Enigma*, 197.

<sup>20</sup> [W. W. Phelps], "Joseph Smith," *Times and Seasons*, 5 (1 August 1844):607.

<sup>21</sup> John Taylor's account in *History of the Church*, 7:107, quoted in Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1977), 417-418.

<sup>22</sup> Original tune: "Star in the East;" [Phelps], "Joseph Smith."

<sup>23</sup> F. Mark McKiernan, "David H. Smith's Verse," *Saints' Heritage: A Journal of the Restoration Trail Foundation* (1988), 35.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Smith, *Sketch Book for the use of Joseph Smith, Jr.* (6 February 1836), 151; quoted in Scott H. Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, Signature Books: 1989), 129-130.

<sup>25</sup> Clothier, "Celebrating the Bicentennial."