

The Unique Message of Jesus Christ

By Elder Robert D. Hales

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

It is time for my response. Nineteen years ago, after my being set apart by the Quorum of the Twelve in the temple as an assistant to the Twelve Apostles, Elder LeGrand Richards gave me two pieces of wisdom that have come to me over and over in the past fifty-some-odd hours that I have known of this call. First was, “Oh, to be a boy and have your whole life ahead of you.” I was forty-two years of age. I am now sixty-one and am once again a boy. There are men sitting on this stand who have been Apostles and in the First Presidency for half my age.

The second gem of wisdom that Elder LeGrand Richards gave me was that each time a new assignment in the Church came to him, it was like the shaking of an oak tree: when the tree shook, an acorn would fall and be planted, allowing him a new beginning in that assignment. “You know, my life has been like a great oak tree. From a tiny acorn, I would grow a great oak tree.” Then he said, “I did it in business, and the oak tree shook. An acorn came down, and they sent me out as a mission president. Then I grew another oak tree; they sent me out a second time as a mission president, and then a third.” Then he talked of being a Presiding Bishop. And each time the oak tree would shake, an acorn would be planted.

At this time, I understand the oak tree has shaken. An acorn has been planted; it is a new beginning.

I express gratitude, my brothers and sisters, for the strength which comes through your faith and prayers. I am in need of your prayers at this time of my calling. To be an Apostle of the Lord, I am finding, is a process—a process of repentance and humility, to look inward as we’ve been instructed and ask for forgiveness and strength to be what I should be. Unfortunately, I am not a perfect man, and infallibility does not come with the call. Therefore, I must ask for forgiveness from Heavenly Father for those things which I have done which are less than perfect and ask forgiveness of anyone I might have offended knowingly or unknowingly because of my personality or style.

The strength which will come through your prayers will be invaluable to what I need to do to forge the spiritual strength required to have my voice and my testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ penetrate the hearts of those who will hear.

I express my appreciation to my parents, my dear brother who has passed away, and my sister for their loving example. I am grateful for the many teachers, and the priesthood leaders who work week after week, teaching us as youth to love the Lord. I wish, also, to express appreciation and my deep love for my wife, children, and grandchildren. I have been privileged to work among the finest Brethren that this earth can have in the Quorum of the

Seventy—working together and forging our testimonies to further the Lord’s work.

In the closing of this chapter of my stewardship as the Presiding Bishop, I wish to welcome and sustain Bishop Bateman as the new Presiding Bishop of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and let him know of the marvelous experiences that he will have in his calling.

I love the four Counselors who have served with me, Elder Eyring, Elder Pace, Bishop Burton, and Bishop Edgley. They are deeply spiritual and truly devoted men whose love for the Lord has been an example to me. I would also like to express thanks and appreciation to the loyal staff in the Presiding Bishopric’s office, both at Church headquarters and around the world. My expression of appreciation would not be complete without communicating my thanks for the faithful talents and labors of the Saints around the world.

We have such faithful members of the Church. I have known of the tithes and offerings and the freewill offerings that have led to welfare and humanitarian efforts. This is a marvelous work and a marvelous Church with magnificent members. Each, in their own individual callings, live the gospel and are an example to those of us who travel the world and meet them.

My testimony grew as I grew—nourished and taught by countless others who helped me by their example of living the gospel. I shall be eternally grateful for the many good people who, in serving the Lord, have blessed my life.

I bear witness to what President Hinckley taught last night in priesthood meeting about Church government. Over the past nine years, on a daily basis, I have seen the wisdom of the Lord’s plan as it functions under today’s circumstances.

But that closes the chapter. The oak tree is shaken. The acorn is planted, and this is Easter—commemoration of the Savior coming forth after three days as the resurrected, risen Lord. For the rest of my sojourn here in mortality, I will have the opportunity to bear testimony as a special witness of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is a God; he is Jehovah of the Old Testament (see Abr. 2:7–8); he is the Savior of the New Testament.

Jesus Christ dwelt in the heavens with his Father (see John 1:1–5), and we dwelt with them as spirit children of God the Father.

Jesus Christ presented his Father’s eternal plan, that plan of which we are all part. We come to this earth to undergo testing for a probationary period and to have opposition in all things. Through the eternal principle of agency, we are free to choose liberty and eternal life and return with honor to God’s presence if we live righteous lives; or to choose captivity and spiritual death (see Moses 4:1–4).

Jesus Christ is the creator of all things on earth, under the direction of his Father (see Moses 1:33; Eph. 3:9).

“The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (1 Jn. 4:14). Jesus Christ came to this

earth, born of Mary, a mortal mother. His Father was Almighty God (see Luke 1:26–35).

Jesus Christ was baptized by immersion by John the Baptist, and the Holy Ghost was manifest in the “Spirit like a dove descending upon him” (Mark 1:10). And his Father spoke: “Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11).

Jesus Christ organized his church and selected twelve Apostles, and also prophets, sevens, and evangelists (see Eph. 4:11; Luke 6:13; Luke 10:1).

Jesus Christ’s message is unique. He stands between us and his Father; he is the Mediator (see D&C 76:41–43; John 3:17). Through him shall all mankind be saved and by him shall all mankind be saved.

Jesus Christ is the Redeemer, our Savior; only he with a mortal mother and an immortal Father could fulfill the Atonement and die to save all mankind. He did so of his own free will and choice (see Matt. 26:39; Mark 14:34–36; Luke 22:41–42).

Jesus Christ was resurrected and appeared to many after his resurrection (see John 20:11–30; Luke 24:13–44). He taught us the physical characteristics of a resurrected being and told us that we could follow his example and that we would be able to progress and be like him.

Jesus Christ’s ascension into heaven before the eyes of his disciples was accompanied by the promise that in like manner he would come again (see Acts 1:9–11; Mark 16:19–20; Luke 24:51–53). The second coming of Jesus Christ is nigh at hand, as the signs of the Second Coming are being fulfilled this very day.

Jesus Christ appeared with his Father and restored the same organization he established during his ministry through Joseph Smith the Prophet in these latter days. In addition to the Bible, the Book of Mormon was revealed to the world as another witness to testify of his divine calling and ministry.

Jesus Christ leads and guides his church today through revelation to a prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, and his counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles—the same organization he established when he was here on earth (see D&C 102:9, 23; A of F 1:6).

Jesus Christ’s admonition to “come ... follow me” and “follow thou me” is the challenge that he gave to each of us (see Matt. 19:21; John 21:22). He lived in the preexistence in the spirit world; he dwelt and we dwelt with God the Father. He is the Son, Jesus Christ.

We took a mortal body upon us. We will have opposition; we will taste death and be resurrected because of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

May I close my testimony in the same words as the prophet Mormon did shortly after recounting the birth of the Savior:

“Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life” (3 Ne. 5:13).

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

