



Type: Magazine Article

---

## “The Work among the Lamanites Must Not Be Postponed, If We Desire to Retain the Approval of God”

Author(s): Spencer W. Kimball

Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 53, No. 12 (December 1950), pp. 980–982

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

---

**Abstract:** An exhortation to work more towards redeeming the "Lamanites." Kimball encourages the saints to remember them in their prayers and do their utmost to preach to them. He includes a prophecy of Joseph Smith that the saints will go to the Rocky Mountains and there open the door for establishing the gospel among the Lamanites. Wilford Woodruff designated the Zuni, Laguna and Isletas Indians of Southwest New Mexico as Nephite people.

God to the effect that we will pay one-tenth of all that we earn to the Lord. When we entered the waters of baptism and became members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we accepted all of the principles of the gospel, including the principles of tithing.

The Lord has given us the law of tithing in order that he might test our honesty. When we use any portion of God's one-tenth, we are robbing him.

The Lord has given us the law of tithing in order that he might test our love for him. He has declared that if we love him we will keep his commandments; therefore, to the extent that we pay a full tithing, to that extent we have given tangible evidence that we do love the Lord our God.

The Lord has given us the law of tithing to test our obedience. The purpose is to see if we will be faithful in all things that God commandeth us.

Furthermore, the Lord has given us the law of tithing to test our preparedness to enter the kingdom of God, to enter exaltation.

The prophets of God have taught the things I have been mentioning here this morning. I would like to quote from the teachings of one of the great prophets in our day, the Prophet Joseph F. Smith. He said in regard to tithing, this:

By this principle (tithing) the loyalty of the people of the Church shall be put to the test. By this principle it shall be known who is for the kingdom of God and who is against it! By this principle it shall be seen whose hearts are set on doing the will of God and keeping his commandments; thereby sanctifying the land of Zion unto God, and who are opposed to this principle and have cut themselves off from the blessings of Zion. There is a great deal of importance connected with this principle, for by it ye shall know whether we are faithful or unfaithful. In this respect, it is just as essential as faith in God, as repentance of sin, as baptism for the remission of sin, as the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. [As you recall, the Savior said that "except a man have these, he cannot see the kingdom of God."] For if a man keep all the law save it be one point, and he offend in that, he is a transgressor of the law, and he is not entitled to the fulness of the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But when a man keeps all the law that is revealed, according to his strength, his substance, and his ability though what he does may be little, it is just as acceptable in the sight of God as if he were able to do a thousand times more. (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, pp. 282-283.)

President Smith also made this statement:

The law of tithing is a test by which the people as individuals shall be proved. Any man who fails to observe this principle shall be known as a man who is indifferent to the welfare of Zion, who neglects his duty as a member of the Church, and who does nothing towards the accomplish-

ment of the temporal advancement of the kingdom of God. He contributes nothing, either, towards spreading the gospel to the nations, and he neglects to do that which would entitle him to receive the blessings and ordinances of the gospel. (*Ibid.*, p. 283.)

Could the Lord have established or could he now establish another way to take care of the economic needs of the Church? I am positive that he could. He could say, "President George Albert Smith, in yonder hill or mountain there is a great deal of gold. Have the brethren of the Church mine that gold. Use the money to build church houses, to send missionaries out in the mission fields, to take care of all the other needs of the Church. The Latter-day Saints have been faithful in the past in paying many contributions, so from now on they can rest. They don't have to pay any more money to the Church."

Certainly he could do that if he wanted to, but he won't. He is too wise a God to do that. He recognizes the great spiritual blessings which come from paying tithing. They far outweigh the economic blessings. He recognizes that "where a man's treasure is, there his heart will be also." He recognizes the fact that if we contribute much money to help build a church house, we might come to church to get our money's worth. He recognizes the fact that if we give donation after donation to the Church for various purposes, our contributions tie us into the Church. As a matter of fact, we own part of it. We belong there. It develops us spiritually to pay on welfare, to pay tithes, to pay fast offerings, to pay and pay into the Church.

Brethren and sisters, it is a blessing, an opportunity in your lives and in my life to have the privilege of paying into the Church. It helps us to get rid of the selfishness in our hearts. It makes us love each other more. It makes us love God more. In fact, it makes us more godly. In other words, tithing is a spiritual law which God has given us for the purpose of preparing us to come back into his presence and receive eternal life. Therefore, his course is a wise course. Every wise Latter-day Saint will accept it. Not one of us can afford to be part tithepayers nor non-tithepayers. We need the blessings of the Lord.

I humbly ask our Father in heaven to let his Spirit rest down upon you and me and upon every member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, whether he be a full tithepayer or not; may the full tithepayers remain full tithepayers; may the part-tithepayers accept this principle of the gospel and repent of their past negligence. By doing so we might all prepare ourselves to come back into the presence of God and receive exaltation. And for this I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

# "The WORK AMONG THE LAMANITES

*must not  
be postponed,  
if we desire to  
retain the  
approval  
of God"*

JOHN TAYLOR



SPENCER W. KIMBALL

By  
*Spencer W. Kimball*  
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE

MY brothers and sisters, I should like to express here my great love and admiration for President George F. Richards who was with us in our last conference but has since passed away. Of all the men I have known in my life, none has risen to greater heights, in my opinion, than Elder George F. Richards in saintliness, in vision, in understanding, and in love, humility, and power.

I was glad that President Beckstead mentioned in his prayer the Lamanite program. I thought, as he was praying, "Wouldn't it be glorious if two hundred thousand Latter-day Saint families every morn before their breakfast, in their family prayers, were asking that the work of the Lord among the Lamanites might be fur-



thered; and if those same two hundred thousand families might also be on their knees before they retired that night to ask again, among other things, that the blessings of the Lord might be brought to this great people?"

The Lord has devised a very comprehensive plan, and I have a firm conviction that the blueprint that he worked out many millennia ago will be followed, and the structure will be built in accordance therewith.

The Prophet Joseph Smith dedicated the Kirtland Temple in 1836. His prayer, which he stated later was a revelation from the Lord, covered many matters, and in it he made this statement:

And cause that the remnants of Jacob, who have been cursed and smitten because of their transgression, be converted from their wild and savage condition to the fulness of the everlasting gospel. (D. & C. 109:65.)

Our Father began to speak through the mouths of prophets long centuries ago, outlining in prophetic words the history of those many centuries which were to follow. I'm sure that he inspired a little boy, Christopher Columbus, to stand on the quays in Genoa, Italy, and yearn for the sea. He was filled with the desire to sail the seas, and he fulfilled a great prophecy made long, long ago, that this land, chosen above all other lands, should be discovered. And so when he was mature, opportunity was granted to him to brave the unknown seas, to find this land which had been cut off from the rest of the world long centuries, and to open the door, as it were, to the teaching of these people and bringing them back to their Heavenly Father.

I have a firm conviction that the Lord led the Pilgrims and the Puritans across the ocean, perhaps permitted the persecutions that would bring them here, so that when they came to the American shores with their righteous blood and their high ideals and standards, they would form the basis of a nation which would make possible the restoration of the gospel. I am sure that since there was not religious liberty, not political liberty here, the Lord permitted these few poorly-armed and ill-clad men at Valley Forge and elsewhere to defeat a great army with its trained soldiery and its many mercenaries, a few against the many, but the few had on their side the Lord God of heaven, that gave them victory. And there came political liberty and religious liberty with it, all in preparation for the day when a young boy would come forth and would seek and make contact with the Lord and open the doors of heaven again. Following that great manifestation to Joseph Smith came the opening of Cumorah Hill and the speaking of the dead from the dust.

I am sure that all this was for a well-planned purpose. The Lord knew exactly what he was doing, and though evil forces were at play, they were

all brought to bow, so that the purposes of the Almighty would be fulfilled.

I should like to quote to you a paragraph from Wilford Woodruff, stated by him in 1873:

I am looking for the fulfilment of all the things that the Lord has spoken.

For long centuries the Lord has said how this chosen people would fall into transgression and how some centuries after Christ they would be so deep in sin they would lose the faith, and that certain ones of them would be destroyed. Now, Brother Woodruff says he knows that these things will all be fulfilled,

... and they will come to pass as the Lord lives. Zion is bound to rise and flourish. The Lamanites will blossom as the rose in the mountains. I am willing to say here that although I believe this, when I see the power of the nation destroying them from the face of the earth, the fulfilment of that prophecy is perhaps harder for me to believe than any other revelation of God that I have ever read.

Brother Woodruff lived in the day when the Lamanites were being destroyed. They were the "Vanishing Americans" at that time, and they were being persecuted and driven and killed and reservationed about that time of the nation's history. He continued:

It looks as though there would not be enough left to receive the gospel; but notwithstanding this dark picture, every word that God has ever said of them will have its fulfilment, and they, by and by, will receive the gospel. It will be a day of God's power among them and a nation will be born in a day. The chiefs will be filled with the power of God and will receive the gospel, and they will go forth and build the New Jerusalem, and we shall help them. They are branches of the House of Israel and when the fulness of the Gentiles has come in and the work ceases among them, then it will go in power to the seed of Abraham.

We are given to understand that the work commenced when the book came forth; for in Ether, fourth chapter, we read:

Therefore, when ye shall receive this record ye may know that the work of the Father has commenced upon all the face of the land. (Ether 4:17.)

The Prophet Joseph Smith gave us the thought that the Lord brought us out here from the East to bring the gospel to the Lamanites. One of the most important things that can possibly happen in this Dispensation of the Fulness of Times is to bring to the Lamanites a knowledge of God. He says:

... there will be tens of thousands of Latter-day Saints who will gather in the Rocky Mountains, and there they will open the door for establishing the gospel among the Lamanites, who will receive the Gospel and their endowments and the blessings of God.

Brigham Young seemed to catch the vision of it. He said that the Lord could not have devised a better plan than to put us where we are in order to accomplish that very thing of educating and teaching the Lamanites. Our ancestors came a thousand miles across the desert, under terrific persecutions and hardships, to locate where the Gentiles had scattered the Lamanites. They had pretty well "reservationed" them here in the western states. They were in our every county, and the Lord brought us out here that we might teach them the gospel.

Brothers and sisters, that work has continued with some interruptions through the century. Now the Lord has made another step. It seems to me he is bringing the Lamanites back to us. They were sent onto reservations all over the west, and now the largest, the Navajo Reservation, will not support its people. The Navajos are being starved out. They are coming back among us into the beet and cotton fields, on the railroads, and in the mines to find employment. They are coming back into the stakes of Zion where we have stake missions and where we have thousands of good Latter-day Saints who live the gospel, and thousands of devoted stake missionaries who will teach them the truth. Here is our great opportunity. The Lord seems to have planned everything for our sake. If we fail our opportunity, I am sure the Lord will not easily forgive us.

You will be interested to know that there are some forty thousand Lamanite members of the Church in the world, including the islands of the sea. There are probably ten thousand Lamanite members in North America in the Mexican missions and the Indian mission. There are 902 Lamanite members in the English-speaking missions in the Eastern, Northern, Central States, and other North American missions. And this work has gone forward splendidly under some of our mission presidents. We have baptized 1823 Lamanites in the last two-and-a-half years in the three missions that specialize in Lamanite proselyting in North America. We have baptized 480 Indians down in the little Indian mission, with a token number of missionaries. About an equal number have been blessed, children under eight years of age who belong to families of friends and investigators and members, so that we now have more than twelve hundred members there in our short period of missionary work. We have approximately seventeen hundred Indian members in the stakes of Zion. We have baptized 347 in the sixty-five stakes which have reported so far, in this period, since the work was inaugurated.

In the missions in the United States and Canada, we have baptized 248 Indians in this short period. You will be interested to know that we are baptizing more Indians for each missionary than the Church is baptizing in the rest

(Continued on following page)



of the world. There were three and three-tenths baptisms for each missionary in the Indian mission in 1949, compared to about two-thirds that many for the other missions in North America. We have about fifty baptisms of Indian youth who have come from the reservation and who are living in the homes of Latter-day Saints on a daughter-mother and son-father basis. Here the Indian boy or girl becomes an unofficial member of the family, and is neither a servant nor a guest, where foster parents are taking care of them and are giving them education and training, and they soon come into the Church at their own request. We have about fifty-one Lamanite missionaries in the mission field now, and they will be increasing very rapidly, I am sure. We have a full-blooded Navajo girl who goes into the mission field Monday morning, the first from that nation. We have a Pima Indian in the mission field now, and we have a Catawba Indian coming from the East who goes into the mission home soon, en route to one of the other missions in the Church. Brother (E. Wesley) Smith told us yesterday there were ten Lamanite missionaries from Hawaii who were over in the Orient, I believe.

I should like to give you a few quotations from some of the early brethren. Joseph Smith said that this work was extremely essential, and he sent Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, Parley P. Pratt, and Ziba Peterson out as early as October 1830. It wasn't very long after the plates had come out of the Hill Cumorah. In section thirty-two of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord Jesus Christ says of those Lamanite missionaries:

... and I, myself, will go with them, and be in their midst; ... and nothing shall prevail against them. (D. & C. 32:3.)

And then the Prophet Joseph Smith said,

... and there (in the Rocky Mountains) they (the Latter-day Saints) will open the door for the establishing the gospel among the Lamanites who will receive the gospel and their endowments and the blessings of God.

And Brother John Taylor said:

... the work among the Lamanites must not be postponed if we desire to retain the approval of God.

Oliver Cowdery, even in that early day, had found the Navajos in the far Southwest, and he reported it to the brethren, feeling that it was a very important thing. Then Wilford Woodruff said this further, as he went down into the southwest, in New Mexico, and visited among the Indians there. He said:

In my short communication of the second inst., I promised to give a fuller account of my visit to the Isletas which I will now endeavor to do.

The Isletas are one of the Pueblo groups down in New Mexico.

I view my visit among the Nephites one of the most interesting missions of my life, although short. I say Nephites, because if there are any Nephites on this continent, we have found them among the Zunis, the Lagunas, and the Isletas, for they are a different race of people, altogether, from the Lamanites. I class the Navajo, Moquis (Hopis), and Apaches with the Lamanites, although they are in advance of many Indian tribes of America. I class the Zunis, Lagunas, and Isletas among the Nephites.

And then he goes on to say, that as soon as they dismissed this particular meeting among the Isletas, and were going to leave, one of the Nephites arose,

... full of the spirit of the Lord and said, "Friends, why do you dismiss us and leave us this way? This is the first time we have heard of our forefathers and the gospel and the things we have looked for from the traditions of our fathers. If our wives and children are weary, let them go home. We want to hear more. We want you to talk all night. Do not leave us so."

Brother Brigham Young said: "It is our duty to feed and teach these Indians." Let me quote a few lines from him. He advised us to "educate them and teach them the gospel" so that many generations would not pass ere they should become a white and delightful people.

This is the land they and their fathers have walked over, called their own. And they have just as good right to call it theirs today as any children have to call any land their own. They have buried their fathers and mothers and children here. This is their home, and we have taken possession and occupy the land where they used to hunt. Now the game is gone, and they are left to starve. ... The Lord has given us the ability to cultivate the ground and reap bountiful harvests. We have an abundance of food for ourselves and for the stranger. ... We are living on their possessions and at their homes.

I should like to quote again from President John Taylor. He said:

The work among the Lamanites must not be postponed if we desire to retain the approval of God. Thus far we have been content simply to baptize them and let them run wild again, but this must continue no longer; the same devoted effort, the same care in instructing, the same organization and priesthood must be introduced and maintained in the House of Lehi as amongst those of Israel gathered from Gentile nations. As yet God has been doing all, and we comparatively nothing. He has led many of them to us, and they have been

---

I want to say to my friends that we believe in all good. If you can find a truth in heaven, earth, or hell, it belongs to our doctrine. We believe it; it is ours; we claim it.—Brigham Young.

baptized, and now we must instruct them further and organize them into churches with proper presidencies, attach them to our stakes, organizations, etc., in one word, treat them exactly in these respects as we would and do treat our white brethren.

Brigham Young put this into practice, the proclaiming the gospel to the Lamanites, and he sent missionaries up on the Salmon, over in Carson Valley, over into Moab, down on the Santa Clara, up around Blackfoot, and elsewhere. He also sent a mission out to the Indian territory. We made five attempts to establish the work in that area. There were twelve missionaries went in 1855. The missionaries were withdrawn from almost all of these places when Johnston's Army came to Utah. And so the work ceased in many places. Malaria, persecution, and death hampered the work, and by 1860 the Indian territory mission work had lapsed. There were few missionaries to send, the civil war was on, and conditions at home were difficult, and we had just begun to get established here in the West. A period of seventeen years elapsed, and those converts and investigators were lost, of course, with no one to teach them. In 1877 another group of missionaries went to the Indian territory. After six months they returned. The malaria was too much for them. A year later Elder George Teasdale was sent with some other missionaries, and the work began again, but they also returned in about six months. The malaria was most severe.

Two years later a fourth attempt was made to establish the work, and missionaries were sent again. Though the malaria was severe, they remained, and the mission went on to the present time; but other changes that were severe came upon the Indian work. Texas, Kansas, Missouri, and other states were added to the Indian Territory Mission, and it became the Central States Mission, and the emphasis was gradually transferred from the Indians to the non-Indians. When I was in that mission in 1914, no mention was ever made of Indians, all the work being done among the whites. About two years ago President Francis Brown of that mission sent missionaries again to work among the Indians in Oklahoma, and the work is again going forward.

It is time now that we began to give proper emphasis to this great work of bringing the Lamanites to a knowledge of their God. It is our responsibility and our opportunity. Now, brothers and sisters, in the stakes and missions you will have a chance to teach the Indian. Let your prayers ascend to the Lord in behalf of them and then do your utmost to bring them to higher standards, and above all, give to them the gospel of the kingdom and the knowledge of God, as they once had.

May the Lord bless the Lamanite people, and bless us that we may realize our responsibilities toward them. This I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.