

Watchman On the Tower

Stake Conference Priesthood Leadership Session, April 30, 2016

Mike Baird

Intro

- Watchtower in Israel on hike
 - Mountains
 - Cities on the hills
 - Springs up on the side of the hills
 - Watchtowers

Watchtowers

- Watchtower in the field to protect crops and herds from thieves and animals
- Watchtower at city gates to watch for approaching danger and fend off attacks

Watchman

- Elevated view
- Can see what others can not
- Are vigilant
- Warn of things that are far off
- Offer safety and protection

Watchman – The Prophets and Apostles

- Prophets are compared or referred to as watchman by the Lord
 - Ezekiel 3:17
"I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me."
- Characteristics of the Prophets as watchman
- Elevated view
 - Prophets are drawn close to the Lord and are allowed to see things from a heavenly perspective
- See things the rest of us cannot see
 - Mosiah 8:17
"... a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things

shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known."

- Are vigilant
 - Russel M Ballard
 - " Through the centuries, prophets have fulfilled their duty when they have warned people of the dangers before them. The Lord's Apostles are duty bound to watch, warn, and reach out to help those seeking answers to life's questions. " ("God Is at the Helm," Ensign, Nov. 2015)
- Warn of things that are far off
 - **Guide to the Scriptures: "Prophet"**
 - "A prophet denounces sin and foretells its consequences. He is a preacher of righteousness. On occasion, prophets may be inspired to foretell the future for the benefit of mankind"
(lds.org/scriptures/gs)
- Offer safety and protection
 - As we heed the prophets we can find safety
 - We can avoid calamities both individually and as a group

Watchman – Why do we not follow?

- If we had a "movie view" of the scene I described
- In this movie we saw:
 - Saw danger approaching
 - Saw the watchman give warning
 - Saw some villagers ignore the warning
 - Saw some villagers dismiss the watchman as foolish, someone who just lives off the labors of the villagers and wants the villagers under their control
 - Saw some villagers argue with the watchman
- What would we think?
- With the view we have those villagers seem foolish
- We read and wonder – how could the people reject the prophet's counsel?
- Abinadi
 - Noah – you should listen to him not your priests
 - Noah appears foolish to us

- Yet don't our Prophets and apostles today have the same things happen to them?
 - Some ignore the warnings and counsel
 - Some dismiss the modern day watchman as foolish
 - Some argue about and against what the modern day watchman is telling us
- 2 Timothy 4:3
 "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;"
- Isn't that a pretty good description of some of the things that have been happening in the church in the last while?
- Seems like every time I turn around there is a new advocacy group within the church
- I would like to address this more directly
- Is it OK to have a different opinion than the authorities of the church?
- Here is a quote from a member of the first presidency
- Guess who and when this was said
- George Q Cannon (1869)
 " A friend ... wished to know whether we ... considered an honest difference of opinion between a member of the Church and the Authorities of the Church was apostasy. ... We replied that ... we could conceive of a man honestly differing in opinion from the Authorities of the Church and yet not be an apostate; but we could not conceive of a man publishing these differences of opinion and seeking by arguments, sophistry and special pleading to enforce them upon the people to produce division and strife and to place the acts and counsels of the Authorities of the Church, if possible, in a wrong light, and not be an apostate, for such conduct was apostasy as we understood the term "
(Gospel Truth, sel. Jerreld L. Newquist, 2 vols., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974, 2:276-77)
- I was a bit astonished when I found this quote by the date and person
- Yet shows that this is not a new issue
- Michael Otterson (managing director of Public Affairs for The Church)
 "Kate Kelly, a founder and former board member of Ordain Women

excommunicated by her local LDS leaders in 2014, asked about the church's position on women in the priesthood and if those who advocate for women to receive the priesthood should be punished in their local congregations.

(Answer):

People aren't punished for opinions," he added, "and I think there is a significant degree of misunderstanding. Having opinions, even about whether women should hold the priesthood, is certainly within the purview of any member of the church. However, when those opinions transfer into advocacy or lobbying, particularly when they're clearly lobbying against what has been declared as clear doctrine by church leaders, that crosses a line, and in a few cases, and you mentioned your own case, in a few cases that has led to a disciplinary council." (More expansive boundaries, not 'bubbles,' for LDS Church, Otterson says. Deseret News Wednesday, April 13 2016 (<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865652045/LDS-Church-boundaries-more-expansive-than-restrictive-Michael-Otterson-says-at-UVU.html>))

- For me personally having a different opinion than our church leaders is a red-flag, a warning, sirens going off.
 - Comes from the Holy Ghost
 - Feeling that something is out of tune or dissonant
- Our duty is to follow the watchman
- We just heard our watchman a few weeks ago
 - What did they say?
 - What should we do or think?
- Bruce R McConkie
 - " You don't have to live a life that's truer than true. You don't have to have an excessive zeal that becomes fanatical and becomes unbalancing. **What you have to do is stay in the mainstream of the Church** - keeping commandments, paying your tithing, serving in the organizations of the Church, loving the Lord, staying on the straight and narrow path." ("The Probationary Test of Mortality," Devotional Address given at University of Utah Institute of Religion, January 10, 1982, p. 11.)
- Focus on "mainstream of the church"

- If we find ourselves on the fringe of the church, at odds with the rest of the membership then we can know that we are not heeding the Watchmen on the tower

Watchman – Stake President, Bishop

- Not only Prophets and apostles
- Applies to our Stake
- Stake President is a watchman for the stake
- Stake President hold keys to spiritual and temporal guidance for our stake
 - It will be specific to our stake
 - It will always be in harmony with the Prophet and Apostles
 - He will be speaking later today and tomorrow on the things that are on his mind
 - We should give heed to what he says
 - Not dismiss it, or think it foolish, or argue about or with him
- Applies to our wards
- Bishop is a watchman for the ward
- Bishop holds the keys to spiritual and temporal guidance for his ward
 - It will always be in harmony with the Prophet and Apostles and the stake president
 - It will be specific to our ward

Watchmen in the Quorum

- Applies to our Priesthood quorum
- Quorum President is a watchman for the quorum
- He holds the keys
 - It will always be in harmony with the Prophet and Apostles, Stake President, and Bishop
 - It will be specific to our Quorum

Our Duty

- Brethren – our duty is clear
- We have been called to serve our brother's and sisters in leadership capacities in our stake
- We need to be examples in following the prophet
 - We cannot be in a position of opposition, murmuring about their teachings or speaking ill of the Lord's anointed
- We need to be studying daily in the scriptures for the words of watchmen of old
- We need in particular to be studying daily the words of our watchman today
 - I re-read this morning President Monson's talks from conference
 - "Wherever you go, your priesthood goes with you"
 - "It has been said that the door of history turns on small hinges, and so do people's lives. The choices we make determine our destiny."
 - "May we ever choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong"

Testify

- As we study the words from conference and the monthly Ensign we will receive inspiration
 - Personal
 - Family
 - Calling
- As we follow we will find peace
- Can you hear the primary children singing:
Follow the prophet, follow the prophet,
Follow the prophet; don't go astray.
Follow the prophet, follow the prophet,
Follow the prophet he knows the way.
- That way leads us to God
- Testify of President Monson and 12 apostles