

This Is Our Time!

By Elder S. Gifford Nielsen

God has sent us right here, right now, at this momentous time in history.

President Russell M. Nelson said, “*We live in the day that “our forefathers have awaited with anxious expectation.” We have front-row seats to witness live what the prophet Nephi saw only in vision, that “the power of the Lamb of God” would descend “upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.” You, my brothers and sisters, are among those men, women, and children whom Nephi saw. Think of that! Regardless of where you live or what your circumstances are, the Lord Jesus Christ is your Savior, and God’s prophet Joseph Smith is your prophet. He was foreordained before the foundation of the earth to be the prophet of this last dispensation, when “nothing shall be withheld” from the Saints. Revelation continues to flow from the Lord during this ongoing process of restoration.*” (Hear Him, Apr 2020 Sunday Morning Session)

President Russell M. Nelson also said, “*As you study your scriptures during the next six months, I encourage you to make a list of all that the Lord has promised He will do for covenant Israel. I think you will be astounded! Ponder these promises. Talk about them with your family and friends. Then live and watch for these promises to be fulfilled in your own life.*” (Let God Prevail, Oct 2020 Sunday Morning Session)

For those confused about why this time in history is momentous or where we are “right here, right now” these two quotes from a prophet of God should bring things into perspective. Do a study on “the power of the lamb” and figure out the points of reference on your own to really understand the magnitude of this. You can also watch/read my papers *Where Are We?* and *The Power of the Lamb* to help you in your studies.

In 1978, I stood on a football field in a stadium packed with 65,000 fans. In front of me were several very large opponents who looked like they wanted to take my head off. It was my first game as a starting quarterback in the National Football League, and we were playing the reigning Super Bowl champions. To be honest, I questioned whether I was good enough to be on the field. I dropped back to throw my first pass, and as I released the ball, I was hit harder than I’d ever been hit before. At that moment, lying under a pile of those massive athletes, I wondered what I was doing there. I had a decision to make. Would I let my doubts overtake me, or would I find courage and strength to get up and to carry on?

It's easy to say you love something, it's easy to say that you support something etc., but it isn't until these moments, lying on the ground so to speak that we really have to make decisions. This concept of having to make a decision is something that has cropped up over and over again in recent papers, talks and studies because of it's point of reference with regards to last day timelines and events.

In D&C 45 we read that after “a desolating sickness shall cover the land” that the following choice will be being made throughout the land, “but my disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved; but among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices and curse God and die.” (vs. 31 and 32)

This is the choice- do we stand in holy places or do we curse God and die? It’s all fun and games following the prophet and telling others to follow him too until the prophet “counsels” you to do something that your “spirit-o-meter” told you was of the devil...Then all of the sudden you have to start making some real choices. Your “spirit-o-meter” told you something and now prophets and apostles are counseling you to do something else, this is your metaphorical “getting hit harder than you have ever been hit before”, now lying on the ground you are wondering what you are doing there- you have a decision to make.

Elder Heber C. Kimball said, “*all true Latter-day Saints will be tested to the limit. Many will apostatize and others will be still not knowing what to do*” (Heber C. Kimball, First Counselor in the First Presidency, May 1868, in Deseret News, 23 May 1931; see also Conference Report, Oct. 1930, p. 58-59)

People forget that “the Assyrian(s)” of Alma the Elder’s day commanded them to “stop praying vocally” and Alma the Elder and his people...did just that! Stopped praying vocally. (Mosiah 24:10-16) What?! A man of God telling people, giving them “counsel” to not pray vocally?! He must have been a fallen prophet leading them astray!

Alma the Elder’s group vs Limhi’s group:

Elder L Tom Perry: “*What was the difference between the people of Alma and the people of King Limhi? Obviously, there were several differences: the people of Alma were peaceful and more righteous; they had already been baptized and entered into a covenant with the Lord; they humbled themselves before the Lord even before their tribulations started. All these differences made it appropriate and fair that the Lord would deliver them quickly in a miraculous way from the hand which kept them in bondage. These scriptures teach us of the Lord’s power of deliverance.*” (The Power of Deliverance, April 2012)

I really, truly believe these two groups are being formed right now as this choice is being made. Make the choice; Alma’s group is going to be leaving soon.

I didn’t realize at the time how this experience would prepare me for future opportunities. I needed to learn that I could be strong and courageous in the face of difficult situations.

A football game might not be nearly as important as the challenges you will face. In most cases, there won’t be a stadium full of people watching. But your valiant decisions will have eternal significance.

Maybe we don’t always feel up to the challenge. But our Heavenly Father sees us as fearless builders of His kingdom. That is why He sent us here during this most decisive time in the world’s history. This is our time!

The choice of words here, once again, all hearken back to and confirm the exact same time period. “**Builders** of His kingdom...during this most **decisive time**”- the choice to stand in holy places at this time will determine just how little or how much building of the New Jerusalem we will be apart of, but not only that, “your decisions will have **eternal significance**.” There is no “not taking a side on this.” As Elder Holland taught, “*We are witnessing an ever greater movement toward polarity. The middle-ground options will be removed from us as Latter-day Saints. The middle of the road will be withdrawn. If you are treading water in the current of a river, you will go somewhere. You simply will go wherever the current takes you. Going with the stream, following the tide, drifting in the current will not do. Choices have to be made. Not making a choice is a choice. Learn to choose now*” (Elder Bednar, We Will Prove Them Herewith, Oct 2020). Or as the Lord says, “So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” (Revelation 3:16)

Listen to what President Russell M. Nelson said shortly after becoming President of the Church: “Our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, will perform some of His mightiest works between now and when He comes again. We will see miraculous indications that God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, preside over this Church in majesty and glory” (“Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” Ensign or Liahona, May 2018, 96).

This quote is also found in President Nelson’s April 2020 Ensign message, *Preparing the World for the Savior’s Second Coming*. If you haven’t taken the time to study that message I would recommend doing so- it went under a lot of people’s radars. I have a breakdown of that talk that you can use to help you in your own studies.

Mightiest works? Miraculous indications? What will that look like? What role will we play, and how will we understand what to do?

This is why believing the false doctrines opined by men is so damning. When anybody grasps what is being said here it will always follow this line of questioning- What are we talking about? How will I recognize it? What do I need to do? For many people this has now become “It’s already happened, it’s over there, we don’t need to do anything and just need to wait for a rapture!” As we learn in Preach My Gospel, disciples of Christ will always invite/call people to action- “the do”. In Preach My Gospel Chapter 11 it says:

“Remember the following principles:

- *Every ... opportunity...should lead to an invitation to act...*
- *Rarely, if ever, should you talk to people or teach them without extending an invitation to do something that will strengthen their faith in Christ.*
- *If you do not invite people to make commitments, you are not asking them to repent and come to Christ.*
- *During a lesson you may be inspired to extend invitations other than those you planned. Always invite people to repent.*

- *Be bold and confident as you invite people to make commitments (see Alma 38:12). Boldness shows your faith that obedience to the Lord's commandments brings blessings.*
- *People will not likely change unless they are invited to do so."*

With that thought, let me commit you all to find the answers to those questions, what are the Lord's mightiest works? (start with understanding the return of the ten tribes as a body, duh + "PERIOD!" = 😊) What are the miraculous indications and what will they look like? What will be our role, what will we do? My Macro Last Day Timeline series and other papers will help you find those answers.

I don't know all the answers, but I do know that the Lord needs us to be ready!

This is a clear reference to the Parable of the 10 Virgins. If you haven't yet, I would recommend reading/watching my paper on that.

Worthily exercising priesthood power has never been more crucial.

President Packer: *"While the priesthood is presently all over the world, we call on every elder and high priest, every holder of the priesthood to stand, like Gideon's small but powerful force of 300, in his own place. We now must awaken in every elder and high priest, in every quorum and group, and in the father of every home the power of the priesthood of the Almighty.*

The Lord said that "the weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones." (Doctrine and Covenants 1:19)

The prophet Nephi also told of "the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth" and said that "they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory." (1 Nephi 14:14)

We need everyone. The tired or worn out or lazy and even those who are bound down with guilt must be restored through repentance and forgiveness. Too many of our priesthood brethren are living below their privileges and the Lord's expectations.

We must go forward, confident of the supernal power of the priesthood. It is a source of strength and encouragement to know who we are and what we have and what we must do in the work of the Almighty." (The Power of the Priesthood, April 2010)

Priesthood power is tied directly to Power of the Lamb, Gideon's army, Joseph's Boy, etc., which is how we get the redemption of Zion. Saying it has never been so crucial is acknowledging the time period we are in right now.

Do we believe God's prophet? Can we find and fulfill our destiny? Yes, we can, and yes, we must, because this is our time!

I just can't even with this quote... How do people in the Church hear this and not understand what was just said?! DO WE BELIEVE GOD'S PROPHET?! DO WE?! ARE WE GOING TO

FIND OUT WHAT OUR DESTINY REALLY IS? (the covenants made to the House of Israel)
ARE WE? AND ARE WE GOING TO FULFILL THAT DESTINY?! WE HAVE TO! THERE
IS-NO-MORE- TIME! WAKE UP!

If you don't believe in the Lord's prophet, at least be honest about it! If you don't believe that the words of the Lord will be fulfilled literally and plainly, at least be honest about it! If you want to curse God and die spiritually, which is exactly what you are doing, be honest about it and just go away and curse God and die in the corner. For the love of mercy, don't take people down with you! Don't become the wolf in sheep's clothing for the Lord said of such it would be better if they just died (Matthew 18:6-10). Stand in holy places! Stand with the prophets! Stand with the Lord! When the Lord says He will do something, He will literally do it! If you wish to curse God and die do so quietly, not proudly and vocally over YouTube, for it will be better for you to just die then to continue doing what you are doing.

Matthew 18:5–10. A Warning Not to Offend Little Ones

Though Jesus was speaking to leaders of His day when He issued a stern warning not to offend little ones, the message recorded in Matthew 18:5–10 applies to all of us (see D&C 50:40–41 for a broader definition of “little children”). We must not cause anyone seeking greater understanding of the gospel plan to stumble in their faith, nor should we do anything to block their progress toward eternal life. Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught about this warning:

“Few crimes are as gross and wicked as that of teaching false doctrine and leading souls away from God and salvation. . . . If eternal joy is the reward given those who teach the truth and bring souls to salvation, shall not those who teach false doctrines and lead souls to damnation receive as their reward eternal remorse? (D. & C. 18:10–16.)

“... It is better to die and be denied the blessings of continued mortal existence than to live and lead souls from the truth, thereby gaining eternal damnation for oneself” (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 1:420).

When we hear stories of God's mighty servants who came before us—like Moses, Mary, Moroni, Alma, Esther, Joseph, and many others—

Oh thank you... my heart skipped a beat there, afraid he would sacrifice doctrinal truth for politically correct brownie points...

they seem bigger than life. But they were not that different from us. They were regular people who faced challenges. They trusted the Lord. They made the right choices at pivotal moments. And, with faith in Jesus Christ, they performed the works required in their time.

The theme of this talk should be ringing in our ears at this time- making the right choice at pivotal moments and doing the work required. Once again, learning what the choices are and making the correct choice before the test starts would have yielded the best results. But, as Nephi warned us, “many will say, All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well” (2 Nephi 28:21) and “we have received, and we need no more!” (2 Nephi 28:27) In fact, Nephi sees us today getting so bad that he says, “they have all gone astray save it be a few, who are the humble

followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men.” (2 Nephi 28:14) This is why Elder Heber C. Kimball said that many will apostatize and others will be still not knowing what to do.

Consider the Old Testament hero Joshua. He was a devoted follower of Moses, one of the greatest leaders in history. After Moses departed, it was Joshua’s time. He was to lead the children of Israel into the promised land. How would he do that? Joshua had been born and raised in slavery in Egypt. He had no handbook or instructional videos to help him. He didn’t even have a smartphone! But he did have this promise from the Lord:

“As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

“Be strong and of a good courage” (Joshua 1:5–6).

There is so much packed in here I hope I don’t miss anything. People at General Conference only have a specified amount of time to talk, they can’t talk at a snail’s pace for 3 hours like many do on YouTube- they have to cut down their talk to the most important points that they want to get across. Elder Nielsen has gone over what he has, we know it because we just went over it, and then pivots directly into Joshua leading the people into the promised land. Does anybody think that is a coincidence? There are countless stories to share but he says that we need to know about the Lord’s most miraculous works yet to come and what role we are going to play in that, says we need to be ready and worthy and that priesthood power is crucial to what is coming...and then immediately talks about this story. However:

Jerimiah 16:14-16

14 ¶ Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;

15 But, The Lord liveth, **that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north,** and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and **I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers.**

16 ¶ Behold, **I will send for many fishers,** saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; **and after** will **I send for many hunters,** and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.

Which coincides perfectly with **3 Nephi 21:22-29**

22 But if they will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance;

23 And they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem.

24 **And then shall they assist my people that they may be gathered in,** *who are scattered upon all the face of the land, in unto the New Jerusalem.*

25 And then shall the power of heaven come down among them; and I also will be in the midst.

26 **And then** shall the work of the Father commence at that day, even when this gospel shall be preached among the remnant of this people. Verily I say unto you, at that day shall the work of the Father commence among all the dispersed of my people, **yea, even the tribes which have been lost, which the Father hath led away out of Jerusalem.**

27 Yea, the work shall commence among all the dispersed of my people, with the Father to prepare the way whereby they may come unto me, that they may call on the Father in my name.

28 **Yea, and then shall the work commence, with the Father among all nations in preparing the way whereby his people may be gathered home to the land of their inheritance.**

29 And they shall go out from all nations; and they shall not go out in haste, nor go by flight, for I will go before them, saith the Father, and I will be their rearward.

Which ties perfectly into **Moses 7:62**

62 And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; **and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth,** unto **a place** which I shall prepare, **an Holy City**, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called **Zion, a New Jerusalem.**

This is what is coming. The return of Joseph Smith, the redemption of Zion, the gathering of people in and unto the New Jerusalem, the return of the ten tribes as a body, the 144,000 being set apart, ordained and sent out into the world, etc. For as the Lord said,

D&C 103:15-22

15 Behold, I say unto you, the redemption of Zion must needs come by power;

16 Therefore, I will raise up unto my people a man, who shall lead them like as Moses led the children of Israel.

17 For ye are the children of Israel, and of the seed of Abraham, and ye must needs be led out of bondage by power, and with a stretched-out arm.

18 And as your fathers were led at the first, even so shall the redemption of Zion be.

19 Therefore, let not your hearts faint, for I say not unto you as I said unto your fathers: Mine angel shall go up before you, but not my presence.

20 But I say unto you: Mine angels shall go up before you, and also my presence, and in time ye shall possess the goodly land.

21 Verily, verily I say unto you, that my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., is the man to whom I likened the servant to whom the Lord of the vineyard spake in the parable which I have given unto you.

22 Therefore let my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., say unto the strength of my house, my young men and the middle aged—Gather yourselves together unto the land of Zion, upon the land which I have bought with money that has been consecrated unto me.

D&C 101:16-20

16 Therefore, let your hearts be comforted concerning Zion; for all flesh is in mine hands; be still and know that I am God.

17 Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered.

18 They that remain, and are pure in heart, shall return, and come to their inheritances, they and their children, with songs of everlasting joy, to build up the waste places of Zion—

19 And all these things that the prophets might be fulfilled.

20 And, *behold, there is none other place appointed than that which I have appointed; neither shall there be any other place appointed than that which I have appointed*, for the work of the gathering of my saints

The footnote for “Zion” in verse 17 takes you to the word “place” in verse 20, the footnote for “place” in verse 20 takes you to:

D&C 57:1-4

1 Harken, O ye elders of my church, saith the Lord your God, who have assembled yourselves together, according to my commandments, in this land, which is the *land of Missouri*, which is the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints.

2 Wherefore, this is the land of promise, and *the place for the city of Zion*.

3 And thus saith the Lord your God, if you will receive wisdom here is wisdom. Behold, *the place which is now called Independence is the center place*;...

There’s so much to go over that I want to go over in case this is the only time you hear the truth, but we just don’t have the time in one sitting. *The Parable of the Nobleman and the Olive Trees, Joseph to Return, Joseph to Return Continued, Joseph’s Boys, Joseph’s Boys Continued*, etc go over this in a lot more depth.

But before we move on there are five other parallels that people should note:

1. Joshua (Joseph’s Boys) was a devoted follower of Moses (Joseph Smith), one of the greatest leaders in history (the second greatest man to walk the earth)
2. After Moses departed (Joseph Smith died) it was Joshua’s time (Joseph’s Boys’ responsibility to get themselves ready)
3. Joshua was born into slavery (Joseph’s Boys were born into slavery to Babylon)
4. Joshua had no handbook, or instructional videos, he only had the promises from the Lord (Joseph’s Boys have to have the faith as the Brother of Jared)

5. It was Joshua's responsibility to get the children of Israel into the promised land (it is Joseph's Boys' responsibility to redeem Zion)

When I was a new and inexperienced Seventy, I received an urgent phone call from the Office of the First Presidency, asking if I would represent the prophet...

And then after Elder Nielsen goes over the redemption this is his next line? How many people have had dreams that have been shared recently about being called by the prophet? How many people realize that Joseph's Boys will be representing Joseph?

...in visiting a young man in the hospital—immediately. The young man's name was Zach. He was preparing to be a missionary but had been in an accident and suffered a serious head injury.

As I drove to the hospital, my mind raced. An errand for the prophet—are you kidding? What am I going to face? How will I help this young man? Do I have enough faith? Fervent prayer and the knowledge that I possessed the authority of the holy priesthood became my anchors.

There might be many who would ask the same things. Represent the prophet—are you kidding me? How are we going to face the challenge? How will we fulfill our calling? Do we have enough faith? The knowledge we possess will be our only anchors. Elder Heber C Kimball said, *“To meet the difficulties that are coming it will be necessary for you to have knowledge of the truth of this work for yourselves. The difficulties will be of such character that the man or woman who does not possess this personal knowledge or witness will fall. If you have not got the testimony, live right and call upon the Lord and cease not ‘till you obtain it. If you do not, you will not stand.”* (Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1945, p. 446.)

When I arrived, Zach was lying in a hospital bed. An orderly stood ready to whisk him to the operating room so doctors could relieve the pressure on his brain. I looked at his tearful mom and a fearful young friend standing nearby, and I knew clearly that Zach needed a priesthood blessing. His friend had recently received the Melchizedek Priesthood, so I asked him to help me. I felt the power of the priesthood as we humbly gave Zach a blessing. Then he was hurried away for the surgery, and a peaceful feeling confirmed that the Savior would handle things according to His wisdom.

The medical staff performed one last X-ray before making the initial incision. They discovered, to their astonishment, that no operation would be needed.

After much therapy, Zach learned to walk and talk again. He served a successful mission and is now raising a beautiful family.

Of course, that is not always the outcome. I have given other priesthood blessings with equal faith, and the Lord did not grant complete healing in this life. We trust His purposes and leave the results to Him. We can't always choose the outcome of our actions, but we can choose to be ready to act.

You might not ever be asked by the First Presidency to represent them in a life-threatening situation. But we are all called upon to do life-changing things as representatives of the Lord. He will not forsake us. This is our time!

There will be those that will not be asked to do these things, but everyone is called upon to do the life-changing things and be ready. I believe this segue from Elder Nielsen to be his understanding of not only many not being able to take part in these things but also those asked to tarry and do other things.

D&C 101:55

55 And the lord of the vineyard said unto one of his servants: Go and gather together the residue of my servants, and take all the strength of mine house, which are my warriors, my young men, and they that are of middle age also among all my servants, who are the strength of mine house, *save those only whom I have appointed to tarry*;

Peter, the Savior's chief Apostle, was in a ship on the sea when he saw Jesus walking on the water. He wanted to join Him, and the Savior said, "Come." Courageously and miraculously, Peter left the safety of the boat and began walking toward the Savior. But when Peter focused on the boisterous wind, his faith faltered. "He was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him." (See Matthew 14:22–33.)

When winds blow in our lives, where is our focus? Remember, there is always one reliable source of strength and courage. The arms of Jesus extend to us, just as they extended to Peter. As we reach for Him, He will lovingly rescue us. We are His. He said, "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine" (Isaiah 43:1). He will prevail in your life if you let Him. The choice is yours. (See Russell M. Nelson, "Let God Prevail," Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2020, 92–95.)

Here the connection between letting God prevail and the choice previously discussed is made for those who hadn't already made it. President Nelson in 2020 taught of letting God prevail and in 2021 referenced D&C 45:32, this choice was being played out in real time. Letting God prevail is to stand in holy places while letting anything else prevail in our lives is to curse God and die. The focus of our life is what is prevailing in our life, or as the Savior taught, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21).

I want members to take a moment to reflect on what President Nelson's focus has been on, this will once again confirm where we are in the points of reference.

The gathering of Israel? "**Hear Him**"? "**Letting God prevail/prevailing with God**"? **The Second Coming is imminent**? Have these not been his focus? Now, let's read **D&C 29:1-7**:

1 **Listen to the voice of Jesus Christ, your Redeemer**, the Great I Am, whose arm of mercy hath atoned for your sins;

2 Who will gather his people even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, even as many as will **hearken to my voice** and **humble themselves before me**, and call upon me in mighty prayer.

3 Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, that at this time **your sins are forgiven you, therefore ye receive these things**; but remember to sin no more, lest perils shall come upon you.

4 Verily, I say unto you that **ye are chosen out of the world** to declare my gospel with the sound of rejoicing, as with the voice of a trump.

5 **Lift up your hearts and be glad, for I am in your midst, and am your advocate with the Father; and it is his good will to give you the kingdom.**

6 **And, as it is written—Whatsoever ye shall ask in faith, being united in prayer according to my command, ye shall receive.**

7 And ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect; **for mine elect hear my voice** and **harden not their hearts**;

Is it not plain to see that this is where we are right now? “But!”, I hear one say, “where in those scriptures does is talk of the Savior’s imminent return?” “Well,” says I, “if verses 1-7 are where we are right now, verse 8 is where we will shortly be, and verses 9-11 follow after”

8 Wherefore the decree hath gone forth from the Father that **they shall be gathered in unto one place upon the face of this land, to prepare their hearts and be prepared in all things against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth upon the wicked.**

9 For the hour is nigh and the day soon at hand when the earth is ripe; and all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that wickedness shall not be upon the earth;

10 For the hour is nigh, and that which was spoken by mine apostles must be fulfilled; for as they spoke so shall it come to pass;

11 For **I will reveal myself from heaven with power and great glory** with all the hosts thereof, and dwell in righteousness with men on earth a thousand years, and the wicked shall not stand.

The gathering in unto one place is the New Jerusalem where the first of the Lord’s second coming appearances will take place. Verses 9-10 speak of burning and the words of the apostles being fulfilled which has reference to the Mount of Olives and finally verse 11 Christ appears with all of the hosts of heaven at the Great and Dreadful Day. Once again, we are living in the time period directly before the redemption of Zion and building of New Jerusalem and President Nelson’s focus proves that he knows and understands this and is trying to prepare us for it.

At the end of his life, Joshua pleaded with his people, “Choose you this day whom ye will serve; ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15). Because of the choices he made to serve the Lord, Joshua became a great leader in his time. My dear friends, this is our

time! And the choices we make will determine our destiny (see Thomas S. Monson, “Decisions Determine Destiny” [Brigham Young University fireside, Nov. 6, 2005], speeches.byu.edu).

There are many today who view the words of Joshua as extreme, outdated, not progressive enough, or worse, accuse Joshua (and those like him) of pride or a lack of love/charity. But I echo and add my testimony to Elder Nielsen that only those like Joshua, who have made the same choices as Joshua with the same faith and determination to let God prevail, will become the Savior’s great spiritual leaders. It is our time and the choices we are making are determining our destiny. As I have said repeatedly, the choices we are making right now, are determining how much or how little we will have to do with the redemption of Zion, building of New Jerusalem etc. And here Elder Nielsen, a member of the Seventy, echoes the same warning. Elder Nielsen quotes a talk by President Thomas S Monson, “Decisions Determine Destiny”, in which President Monson puts the exclamation mark on this entire point: “When the time for decision arrives, the time for preparation is past.”

While I was serving as a bishop, we had a motto in our ward: Good choices equal happiness—eternally. The youth would pass me in the hall saying, “Bishop, I’m making good choices!” That’s a bishop’s dream!

What do we mean by “good choices”? Someone once asked Jesus, “Which is the great commandment in the law?” He answered:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:36–39).

In the same President Monson talk mentioned above, President Monson talks about three other choices that are worth a read, especially for those younger.

I don’t know about you, but when I read these two great commandments, I detect a third, implied commandment: to love thyself.

Have you ever thought of loving yourself as a commandment? Can we truly love God and love His children if we don’t love ourselves?

A wise leader recently counseled a man who was trying to overcome years of destructive choices. The man felt ashamed, doubting that he was worthy of anyone’s love.

His leader said to him, “The Lord knows you, loves you, and is pleased [with] you and the courageous steps you are taking.” But then he added, “[You] need to hear the commandment to love yourself so you can feel [God’s] love and love others.”

When this brother heard that counsel, he saw life with new eyes. He later said, “I have spent my whole life trying to find peace and acceptance. I have looked for those things in many wrong places. Only in the love of Heavenly Father and the Savior can I find comfort. I know They want me to love myself; it really is the only way I can feel Their love for me.”

Our Heavenly Father wants us to love ourselves—not to become prideful or self-centered, but to see ourselves as He sees us: we are His cherished children. When this truth sinks deep into our hearts, our love for God grows. When we view ourselves with sincere respect, our hearts are open to treat others that way too. The more we recognize our divine worth, the better we understand this divine truth: that God has sent us right here, right now, at this momentous time in history, so that we can do the greatest possible good with the talents and gifts we have. This is our time! (See Russell M. Nelson, “Becoming True Millennials” [worldwide devotional for young adults, Jan. 10, 2016], broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.)

Why the talk of learning to love yourself and forgive yourself in a talk like this? After what he has already gone over, why is this the next logical step? If you haven’t figured it out yet, let me ask you this: When a sinner is trying to overcome years of destructive choices and is feeling ashamed and repents and he comes clean, it is rarely described or taught in any other ways then:

1. Dying and being reborn (baptism ties into this)
2. Being asleep and waking up

*“...Take the boys here, the sons of our brethren and sisters, and you may cut them into inch pieces, and they will not forsake this cause, but they will defend it to the last. **Some of them may be rough, and perhaps some of them do not pray much, but send them into the vineyard, and then you will see them shew forth the power that is in them. At present the Prophet Joseph's boys lay apparently in a state of slumber, everything seems to be perfectly calm with them, but by and by God will wake them up, and they will roar like the thunders of Mount Sinai.**”* (Heber C. Kimball, Journal of Discourses 4:1)

If you knew this to be true like I know it to be true, wouldn’t you likewise worry about these “rough boys” after/while they are waking up? When the scales fall from their eyes and they start asking questions like “why was I so silent before? Why did I waste so much time? Am I worthy? Does Joseph even want me? Will the Savior forgive me?” And when these “boys” lock themselves in their bathrooms and cry on their toilets surrounded by all of these feelings of guilt, we will need to know and recognize our divine worth and that God sent us right here, right now, at this momentous time in history in which our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, will perform some of His mightiest works. You might not have been perfect, but are you here now? Have you woken up? Have you made the choice? Have you come clean? Then forgive yourself, love yourself, and promise yourself and the Lord that you will never be what you were again; promise yourself and the Lord that though you were asleep before and awake now you shall never go to sleep again and have made the choice and are ready to do whatever the Lord calls you to do.

Brothers and sisters, this is our time, the time in which:

Joseph Smith taught that every prophet in every age “looked forward with joyful anticipation to the day in which we live; ... they have sung and written and prophesied of this our day; ... we are the favored people that God has [chosen] to bring about the Latter-day glory” (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith [2007], 186).

We have too much to look forward to, too much required at our hands, to let our past failings be our focus and our burden.

As you face your daily challenges, remember this reassurance offered by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland: “So much rests on our shoulders, but it will be a glorious and successful experience. ... The victory in this final contest has already been declared. The victory is already in the record books ... , the scriptures!” (“Be Not Afraid, Only Believe” [address to Church Educational System religious educators, Feb. 6, 2015], broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

To believe in the scriptures like this is to have faith as the Brother of Jared, something that we are all going to need to have in order to face tomorrow’s challenges and come off the victor.

As always, I will end this talk with the words and testimony of the speaker and make them my own.

On this beautiful Easter weekend, may I extend an invitation that we all pray to recognize and embrace our individual roles as we prepare for the glorious day when the Savior comes again. The Lord loves us more than we can comprehend, and He will answer our prayers! Whether we are on a football field, in a hospital room, or in any other place, we can be an important part of these remarkable events—because this is our time! In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.