

Heavenly Messenger

A Testimony by Elder Gary Hawley

The year was 1970.

The place was Graceland College, Lamoni, Iowa.

The college class was taught by Dr. Ray Zinser.

The purpose of the multiple week class was "To determine if the Zion of our accepted Scriptures would naturally evolve from our present social, economic, religious, and cultural persuasion".

If so, HOW? If not, WHY?

We were all given one partner and one particular area of the questions above. Each team was to report their conclusions at the end of the class. Every team, weeks later, gave their reports. We all concluded the same; that the Zion of our Scriptures, in our opinion, could NOT naturally emerge from our culture in any of the areas examined. Each team reported their belief that our present systems (of then 1970) must have major reconstructions, led by God in His divine guidance, that would lead and empower courageous people of faith and vision.

While examining these areas in question during the class, I remember asking God, in my personal prayer time, "...in Zion, will there be various systems of cultural thought and mores that will be permitted, this allowing each unique culture to be able to express themselves differently in spirit and truth?". i.e. American culture, African, Japanese, Native American etc.. At the time, my prayer seemed not even heard, but I was wrong; God heard.

Two years passed by; Now it was 1972. I was newly married to my now wife, Donna. We are living in Salem, Oregon, Western U.S.A.

One night as we slept, I woke up and saw someone standing there, about three feet from my side of the bed just looking at me. He was around six feet tall, dressed in a one-piece gown from neck to feet, sleeves covering his arms. His clothing was a light golden color. He had a full head of hair without a head covering. As I looked at him, he said, "I have come to answer your question."

I had never experienced anything like this before, but, to my astonishment, as I looked at him, I perceived I was not afraid or pressured within; I was completely at peace in my heart and mind. I tried to think, "...what question is he referring to...?" But before I could complete this simple mental question, I heard my own voice in my mind praying the afore mentioned prayer; the one I spoke during my studies in college, Dr. Zinser's class; '...will there be one doctrine in Zion, or will cultural variations be acceptable?'

I was concerned about disturbing Donna, waking her up during his time with me, and related this to him. He said, "She will not wake up... I will tell you of four universal truths that will be taught in Zion. There are many more than these four, but you would not understand them at this time."

He put his right hand over his chest, then with the same arm swept it around to his right and faced the outside wall of our bedroom. I saw the wall and everything on it and in front of it disappear; in its place emerged a "Living Chart", full of scriptures plus pictures of things and places I had never seen before. There were four vertical columns, each with a title at the top respectively. Above these four columns with titles was written five words in huge type. As I looked, these five words appeared to make an umbrella over the four vertical columns. These five words were, 'GOD INITIATES ALL SPIRITUAL GROWTH'.

To my amazement, everything was pulsating, getting brighter at times, then dim, then getting larger, then a bit smaller in size. They were multicolored, emitting various shades of light. To my perception, what I was looking at was Holy, without any spot; pure in itself and was not subject to time and space as we know it. As I looked, I was once again astonished to realize that this pulsating, living scene, was in exact rhythm with my physical heart. When my heart would beat, the scene and everything in it would pulsate also. I finally realized that what I was seeking was one with my body. I was in it; it was in me.

There was no tension, fear, nor doubt. We 'were one'; in unity and in peace. Not two different things now – only one conscious creation, not bound by time and space. (I did not understand the value of this at that time.)

The personage beside me was also understanding my thoughts. He said, "God initiates all spiritual growth. NEVER forget this!" As he spoke, these five words before me pulsed with light and colors...incredible! And, at the same time, my heart pounded to this new 'music' in my soul. I would hear him repeat this command, 'NEVER forget this!', in my hearing each of the four visits that year. Each time, he presented a single truth, without fanfare or thundering; spaced enough to allow me time to ponder each one of the four spiritual truths that would be taught in Zion.

In his presence, there was never fear or doubt; nor confusion. Only a deep and abiding peace, safety and rest. Time and space changed from the earthbound limitations into pathways of learning, allowing, at times, to be taken back and forth through time and space. Scriptures would emerge within this scene that pulsed with flashing colors; beautiful and powerful before my eyes. It is hard to describe how these scriptures were connected to and beating with my heart each time they appeared. These scriptures were more than just words; they were full of power, ancient, present and futuristic all at the same time.

At the end of the visits, I remember having made 53 pages of notes relating the things the messenger shared. I thought these truths were so emblazoned within my mind and heart that I would never forget their content and beauty.

During that time of teaching and pondering, and the reconstructing of my religious thoughts and prejudices, there were also times while at work, I would sense his presence. I could perceive him entering with the space I occupied with an 'invitation' to learn something more clearly and completely. At those special times, my soul would soar. And I would sense within my soul's created abilities the sharing of many wonderful and marvelous things about our Savior's purpose and His Love.

The teaching that he personally initiated eventually came to an end. I had the 53 pages of notes; fresh insights still vibrating their light of truth in my soul. As with any spiritual understanding that is pure, clean and is heaven's message, the inner cry of the soul is to share the good news with another person. So it was with me. I went to a trusted pastor and presented briefly what I hoped to share with that congregation. After his review, he said that, in his opinion, the information would not be acceptable to share with the Saints.

Needless to say, I was crushed and angry (I had not yet understood that the word of God must change me within before it can minister to another soul). I went home and eventually put my 53 pages of notes in a cardboard box, slowly letting my anger block my testimony of these teachings. His word and teaching stayed locked away in that cardboard box, along with my hard heart for nineteen years.

The year was 1990.

The place was Blue Springs, Missouri in the Great Midwest, U.S.A.

The family, myself and Donna had moved to Blue Springs, and now had three children. Jennifer, Jared and Jacob.

The congregation we attended was Parkview RLDS in the same town. A largely fundamental group of believers which numbered on some Sundays, three to four hundred in attendance. Although we had been members of the branch for some time, I had not been scheduled to preach, which was due to the many number of priesthood there. When I was scheduled for an 11:00 AM preaching assignment for the first time, as was the custom, I had a month to prepare.

During that month, I let the demands of my day job and life in general possess much of the time I should have been in preparation. I had only Friday night and Saturday left to really organize my sermon but was invited to attend that particular Friday night and all-day Saturday an 'inner-healing Workshop' for couples, presented by a former Quaker minister from Denver, Colorado. At first, I refused the invite...then decided to go this this event, feeling the internal messages of guilt and condemnation for not using my time more constructively. But Donna and I went to the couple's seminar anyway and received some good ministry.

At the end of the workshop Saturday evening, each attendee was given a blessing, by prayers to God by several leaders. The former Quaker minister in charge of the whole weekend happened to offer to pray for Donna and I together. He offered a powerful and loving prayer over Donna, then placed one hand on my shoulder and began a prayerful blessing over me. But as he began to pray, he soon stopped his prayer, removed his hand from my shoulder and said, "You are already anointed by God. Do you know that?". I said yes. He then asked if I would allow him to continue to pray, and I said yes. In his prayer, he thanked God for the dreams and visions He had shown me throughout my life, and asked God to pour out His Spirit in the days ahead that He would require those dreams and visions be multiplied to others' hearing and hearts. That in those days of ministry for Jesus, that His Spirit would help me recall and be filled with the same Spirit as when those dreams and visions had been given.

It was around 6:00 PM on Saturday evening when we arrived back to our home in Blue Springs. I had only a few hours to prepare for a sermon then. As I finally prayed about the sermon that I had been asked to share the next morning, I was sure that God was mad at me, and I would look stupid and unprepared to speak the next day. As I prayed, my mind was emptied of the many voices wanting my attention. Then, as clear as anything, a voice resonated within and was able to get my full attention. It seemed to be destined to touch every part of me, inside and outside of my being. "Share the things told you by the messenger 19 years ago for the Sunday worship".

I heard this in my soul over and over again. I argued against it: "...that was 19 years ago (I didn't even know where the notes where), I don't remember everything! This can't be God's direction!". The voice spoke again in my mind, "...Go into the basement and you will find what you need in a cardboard box".

I went into the basement, looked at all the boxes stored there and thought, "this is crazy...which one?!". But I eventually picked one, opened it up, riffled through its' contents and found only 3 of the 53 pages of notes (in my own handwriting), I had made 19 years earlier. I was amazed at the 3 pages, but unable to find the other 50 pages of notes (and have not found them to this day - May 2023).

At this point, I remember telling God, "...this isn't going to work...not enough notes to represent the Spirit of the message! I am going to look unprepared to the people at church!". His clear voice responded within my heart and mind, "I have given you a daughter and endowed her with Spiritual Gifts to assist you at this very time. Tell her what you remember, and I will let her see in her mind what the messenger showed you 19 years ago. She will draw pictures to represent the message on poster board, 20 pieces, each 24"x30". Go and purchase them."

So, I went and purchased 20 pieces. I went home with them, asked Jennifer if she would draw the pictures that I would describe to her. She agreed to try. After a prayer, we began together. I would see in my mind one scripture after another and the picture of places the messenger shared before. Jennifer was fifteen years old at that time. It was about midnight when the 20 posters were complete. Pictures drawn and scriptures listed on them. Jen was exhausted and asked to go to bed. I was left alone with 20 huge 'ministry' notes, and I asked the Lord, "...what do I do with these poster boards" Stand up and hold them in front of my face and speak? What am I to say? How do I tell them these things when I have forgotten many important points?"

My mind and heart were filled again! "Build a free-standing wooden structure, 12 feet tall and 12 feet wide where you can hang four columns of posters, side by side, as your teaching guide. Again, I argued against the thought, "...I KNOW I do NOT have wood in the shop to build this, and no lumber yard is open at 2:00 AM.! I KNOW what I have in my shop, and it isn't this! It cannot be made tonight!"

Oh, the kindness and tender patience of our God. His Spirit simply said, "Go and See!"

So, I went to my shop and found, neatly stacked, on one of my worktables, 1x6's, 1x4's, plywood, nails and screws that I had not bought. No one else had keys to my shop! Yet, as I stared at these materials that I had not bought, nor knew how they got there, I saw in my mind's eye how to take them and build a 12 foot by 12 structure...a free standing, PORTABLE, chart holding frame! As I built it in those wee early hours that Sunday morning, my soul knew I was not only being led by God, but how much I had desperately longed for this day for all those 19 hours to be one with Him again.

It was about 5:00 AM Sunday morning when I had built, and then unscrewed for transport to the church. I put everything in my truck needed to put it together again on site in the chapel at Parkview before the 11:00 AM preaching service. I drove home to change clothes, and then realized I had spent ALL NIGHT preparing charts and a wood stand, but had not even thought of the sermon organization, major points to be made, let alone the flow of what I should share. After all HE had prepared, I was still paralyzed by the other voice inside my head saying, "...your tired, been up all night making 'props'! You don't even know what you are going to say! You are so unprepared! You are doomed for failure...you should not have waited so long to try to prepare! After all...you knew this was scheduled a whole month in advance!"

As I felt this 'black' discouragement begin to make some kind of condemning 'logic', my mind was charged again by the Spirit that had been inviting me to trust all that God had done for my preparation of the worship setting. God's Spirit filled me, and the darkness gave way to His will and my mental real estate!

"Do you not believe that I can and WILL tell you what to say and when to speak My Truths to the congregation this day?"

"Yes, Lord!"

Little did I know the impact of that answer, but it was time to go to church. I was carrying all the wooden structure in pieces into the main chapel at about 10:30 AM. Everyone simply watched. No one offered to help. But in walked a friend (just visiting, not a member of our congregation), who used to live in Vancouver, Washington when I lived in Oregon. I had not seen him for 20 years or so. He said he lived in Blue Springs now and felt he simply needed to come to church there this day. He offered to help me build the wood stand. We got it all assembled with the four vertical columns of five posted boards each; all ready, just in time.

As the time for me to speak came, I could sense the air and space around me was like it was when the messenger would stand with me 19 years before...no fear, no doubt, everything I could perceive was alive...wanting to be a part of a living message of truth, filled with holiness and purity. There were no lack of words given to my mind and heart. I looked out at a congregation longing to hear about our Savior and His love. At one point, I sensed my spirit move away from my body. My spirit was about 6 feet from my physical body, and as I watched my body (from the perspective of my spirit) stand before the brothers and sisters that Sunday morning, my spirit was sweetly enveloped by a Divine and Holy and Pure presence which spoke into my spiritual hearing, "Thank you, thank you, for sharing these things this day!".

I was totally washed clean – every part – washed by the power of the words I believe were from my Lord Jesus. My spirit then re-entered my body and the worship time came to a close. There was not enough time to share all four truths that day, but it was the beginning of future seminars that have been given to various groups since 1990. I praised God for His nature of revealing Himself to us, and His intent to abide IN us, and for His abundant mercy, justice and judgements.

May God bless your path with appropriate ministers who can help bring you to the knowledge of the power and glory of the Risen Christ.

May the Kingdom of God move forward with the brightness of His hope, His faith and His love so exercised and exhibited in Brotherhood.

Zion pleads for your heart and mine – Gary Hawley

Here is a link to the Restoration Gospel Podcast on YouTube where Gary shares this testimony:

<https://youtu.be/Ore8uLv0F6E>