

ABOUT THE 8 WITNESSES CONFERENCE MEETING in MISSOURI:

Ok, so the Eight Witnesses meeting for Zarahemla Branch.... We were there.

After the Phoenix Conference we drove some 1700 miles to make it to Blue Springs, MO.

We attended the meeting on Saturday March 31st, the meetinghouse very reminiscent of LDS meetinghouses, except they had an enormous cross at the front of the chapel, and outside by the driveway. Colbern Road Church was lending the venue to Zarahemla branch to host more people and be able to livestream the meeting. Because of this, there were some "political" issues to consider, of which we were unaware.

Our first impression was "large very unwelcoming church", honestly. People had the same cold feeling of our old LDS wards in Nevada, with people setting purses and jackets to save seats and force elderly people into the overflow.

Meeting started, the 8 witnesses went up front and sat in their chairs in front of tables that had name tags for them, so we would know their names. We were glad to know that not all 8 were from the same restoration "denomination" but rather, from different branches of it (branches not in the LDS sense, which are offshoots of a centralized organization, rather, individual churches which have broken off a larger tree or branch, in this case, from the RLDS or Community of Christ Church). Tyler Crowell read an agreed upon statement, then each proceeded to get up to the microphone to bear their individual witness of the Golden Plates: that they each handled them, that a portion of the sealed portion was released and open, that they saw the inscriptions on each plate, that they looked at the interpreters (stones or Urim and Thummim) and that they saw and handled the sword of Laban (not entirely sure about the sword, although it was mentioned, refer to the videos).

Many records have come forward against this finding. And there are some PDF's online explaining the chronology of events that led to Joseph F. Smith (great-grandson of Joseph Smith Jr.) and Bob Moore testifying in October about handling the plates, about their reality, and about Mauricio Berger from Brazil, being the appointed person, chosen by God, to translate the portion of the sealed portion (Angel Moroni gave him the plates 10 years ago). Those documents may explain the events better than I could, as many of those details we weren't really aware of, so we can't speak of them. All we had known is what was on the recorded videos on ustream.com for Zarahemla Branch.

We met some people there, who were very kind (which made us glad), who were full of expectation for what this might mean. The "fractions" as they are calling them (schisms and offshoots of the Restoration), could be gathered as One. Zion may yet be built, with Its temple, and the Second Coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ ushered. You could see in their faces the hope for these things to be true. Also, you could see a degree of skepticism. Why in Brazil? Why this man, Mauricio, of whom no one knows anything? What if he is a liar? Why not Joseph F. Smith? They all already know and can attest to Joseph F. Smith's character, as they all already know and love him. In our case, we didn't even know he existed up until 2 weeks before the Arizona Conference, so we did not know of his character or whether he, himself, and Bob Moore, could be lying also.

Either way, we went fasting and with an open heart.

The testimonies were shared with conviction, and we could not sense Deception. My husband, Andrew, was already convinced of its truth, although I remained skeptical. At the end of the meeting I was on a mission to gift Joseph a full copy of the Restoration Edition Scriptures (thank Sanpete Fellowship!) and a printed copy of the Prayer for Covenant and Answer, and Andrew was on a mission to look him in his eyes and ask him if he held the plates. While others went around trying to gather autographs (seriously!), I wanted to look this man in the eye and know of a surety whether there was any Guile in him, as did Andrew. Andrew approached him, when he had a chance, shook his hand and had small conversation with him. Andrew didn't even have to ask. He had a dream, three nights before that, and he had to look him in his eye, and he knew what to look for, and it was not there. Andrew was comforted in knowing that he was a servant of God. With very little time to talk to him, he was approached by other people, and Andrew backed off. After Andrew had stepped outside to let our son run around (as he was way tired of sitting still for like 3 hours), I got to speak to Joe (Joseph F. Smith). Joe looked defeated, like he had failed. I didn't think that emotion in his eyes matched the meeting at all, so I proceeded to share with him a little bit of our journey out of the LDS church, getting baptized in the Salt River in Arizona, Denver Snuffer, etc. He shared a bit about disaffected Mormons, in his experience, and then pulled out a paper out of his jacket. See, he had read a portion of this paper during the livestream meeting, but was stopped short, so he couldn't finish. Somehow I knew that this was the reason he felt defeated. So when he pulled it out, I felt a bit of anxiety that Andrew wasn't there with me to hear whatever he would share from that paper, and that there was seriously no one there to witness that he had shared with me what he was about to share. But I suppose the Lord intended it to be this way.

During the meeting the witnesses spoke about Joe Smith being anointed and set apart as a prophet, by Mauricio and in the presence of the 7 other witnesses. People of the different branches got their feathers ruffled (as they all have their own prophets and leaders they look up to, sound familiar?). So they made sure to add that he was "designated" as prophet just for Brazil, to calm the anxieties of others. Joe read from the paper about the destruction that would surely come to the United States (which made Germany after WWII look like child's play, according to Mauricio's account related by the witnesses), destruction that would come if the saints in Zion (terms they view narrowly as the restoration believing people that live in Missouri) didn't repent and become One.

When he pulled the paper out of his pocket in front of me, he reread to me the part about destruction. And then he said (to the best that I can recall), that "the saints must accept Joseph F. Smith as their prophet before April 6th, 2018 or they will not stand". After reading it and putting it back in his pocket he said that this is the Second Invitation. The Lord's hand is extended again in mercy to the saints, who have failed to become One, who have failed to overcome Contention, and that if they do not heed the Lord nor His servants, the time will pass and they will miss it.

Having my wits about me, I thought "Well, isn't that convenient? Another man trying to gain authority or set themselves up a prophet over the people."... Except that, like I said, his eyes didn't betray greed for power, nor the pride of being a direct descendent of Joseph Smith Jr. He seriously had, on top of the sense that he failed to warn the saints, a sense that he doesn't measure up to what is expected of him. That gave me some pause in my hasty judgment. Andrew had the same impression when he looked behind his eyes.

As we went outside to his car so I could give him the bundle of books (hefty bundle, may I add), I explained as best as I could what these scriptures were. He tried to hide it, but he had a look of excitement in his face. "Preserving the restoration" were words he had used as well. Then I shook his hand to say goodbye, and the words almost literally jumped out of my mouth, like this was my last chance to say it, like something big hinged on it: "If you are indeed a servant of God, a prophet, I will follow you". A rushing wind came through and blew through us and went upward. I knew something important had happened. As I shook his hand, I pulled him into a hug and in his ear I said "But I follow no man, I follow Jesus Christ my Lord and King, and His voice only". He smiled, and as he walked back into the building turned back and said "I'll see you again". To which I replied "Next year in Zion" after what Lynne McKinley had taught me just the week before in Arizona. He smiled at that and we parted ways. Then I got in the car with Andrew and wondered how bold I had just been. Andrew heard the whole thing from about 20 feet away despite the wind, and he was stumped. According to him, this did not fit my character, to say anything like that to any man, so he was surprised and even somewhat irritated. But he said things made sense after I told him about the paper and what had happened.

Now I share what happened with those who are preserving the restoration elsewhere. Those who are 'branches' off the LDS Mormon tree. Maybe even LDS people. Anyone who will hear, as I feel a lot of people weren't aware of the things happening in Missouri, whether they matter at all or not. We just know our Lord told us to go, so we went, and now we bear witness of the truthfulness of the witnesses' testimonies. Whether the plates are real or not, these men are not lying.

The following day we had been invited to a prayer meeting at 6am in the upper room of the back end of a church somewhere in the middle of nowhere (or so it seemed at 6am in the dark). Place was under construction, fixtures missing, heavy smell of paint, etc. About 11 of us met there in that tiny room, 8 besides the 3 of us (Andrew, our 7 year old Samuel, and myself). We had the most joyous time taking turns to pray. We had no idea what to expect, but we rejoiced together in our kinship in Jesus Christ and in the Restoration. What a beautiful feeling!!!

One of those there was Gary Metzger, one of the 8 witnesses. We got to look him in the eye also. Andrew asked him while looking behind his eyes, if his testimony was true, and whether he held those plates. He said "yes, it is true". He asked him if he confirmed it with the Holy Ghost, and he said "yes" and then he showed pictures. I asked him if he was a Freemason. He said "no". He shared the photos he had taken with his phone, of the plates. We now know of a surety that all 8 of them were indeed somewhere, holding the plates, as per the photos. [Another person in attendance shared with him a printout of the PDF circulating on the web that claimed the whole thing was deception. I saw Anger rise in this man, but he kept it under check, paper which Andrew and I had found out about two days prior, and had to go to the Lord about. He could not believe anyone could doubt the plates were real, not after the amount of detail they described and expressed. Even though some in attendance that morning didn't quite believe in this Golden Plates and Mauricio find, we all felt One while in prayer and worship, so disagreement didn't quite matter while in worship of Our Beloved Savior Jesus Christ. Then we started talking about coming together as Zion, we related our experiences of the week before in Arizona, and how we got baptized, and that raised questions about authority. Andrew said authority is given by Jesus Christ, and when he was questioned, he answered openly, without reserve. I saw Jealousy and Envy, and also the spirit of Religionism in Gary's eyes, which I did not like. Andrew saw it leave, and then he considered what was said and replied back "I can see us back having to be baptized again as One people for Zion" (or something close to that) which made Andrew very happy. BUT, however flawed

that man seemed to me at that moment, I also knew that he bore witness with conviction and had no Deception, he had indeed held the plates. Whether they be real, and Mauricio and Joseph F. servants of God, remains to be found by those who seek the Lord and His words on the matter, we have found ours.

The previous day I had casually also happened upon Tyler Crowell, another of the witnesses, with whom I shook hands and thanked for sharing his words. He seemed very introverted and worried about how people approach him. People kept harassing them (the witnesses) for answers to questions only the Lord can answer. So he seemed weary of me. I just thanked him and looked him in the eye, attempting to perceive anything other than Truth. I did not find it. He seemed honest as well, without Guile, at least in the matter of the Plates.

I will now request that those who are given to prayer please pray for Joseph F. Smith, Mauricio Berger, the 3 witnesses (Valdeci Machado, Joni Batista, and Wagner Zeppenfeld) and the 8 witnesses (Joseph F. Smith, Bob Moore, Samuel S. Gould, Brad Gault, Gary Metzger, Tyler Crowell, David Gilmore, Kelvin Henson) and their respective families, as well as the branches of the Restoration in Missouri, Utah and elsewhere. When I gave Joe that hug, I felt a "potential" for a future event that disturbed me. I saw evil men scheming against him, and making attempts against his life. Not sure that proves him as a prophet, but either way, I choose to pray for the man, and for whatever responsibilities the Lord has called him to bear. Maybe the whole point of me sharing this whole thing is for this prayer request to go out and be answered by those who feel led to. Either way, prayer is needed. The Lord is moving mightily. We can safely assume opposition in equal measure will ensue. Prayer is always needed.

May Jesus bless us all to overcome Deception individually and collectively, and may we all love Truth more than Error! May Jesus be our light in the darkness and may His invitation to come to Him reach every heart in every corner of this earth, is my prayer in His Holy Name, Jesus' name. Amen.

Andrew, Paula and Samuel Norris

April 6th, 2018

Nome, AK