



The River Cities: Yaxchilan, Piedras Negras, Pomoná

Report on the 31st
Maya Meetings

By Shirley R. Heater

When the focus of the 2007 Maya Meetings was announced, excitement and anticipation was high—the selected ancient “river cities” are located along the middle and upper Usumacinta River, which many believe to be the River Sidon in The Book of Mormon.

Río Usumacinta is the largest river in Mesoamerica. With origins into the highlands of Guatemala, the waters are joined along the journey northward by Ríos Lacantun, Chixoy, Pasión and Salinas, as well as other smaller tributaries, until it empties in the Gulf of Mexico. Headwaters

begin in the highlands of Guatemala (near the origin of the Grijalva—also considered by some as a possible candidate for the River Sidon—which runs northward to the west of the Usumacinta and rejoins it near the Gulf), meanders along the adjoining borders of Guatemala and Mexico past the ancient Maya sites of Altar de Sacrificios and Yaxchilan, until the Guatemala border turns eastward just past Piedras Negras. The last leg of the journey passes through a flat plain to the Gulf.

In ancient times, the river was used both for travel and for trade, although faced with challenges such as fast currents, sometimes impassible rapids, and the rise and fall of the water level. Today a dam proposed along the river at Boca del Cerro (located straight east of Palenque) is a threat to the sites south, including Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan.

The University of Texas at Austin sponsored this annual event, led by David Stuart who has served as director of the Mesoamerican program since 2005, following in the footsteps of Linda Schele who began the meetings in 1976. Those original sessions were centered more around an open exchange of ideas and impromptu sharing, a concept totally new to the field in which scholars tend to protect their work and are reluctant to share. Linda set the example making her work openly available for use by scholars. Out of that atmosphere came tremendous growth in knowledge and understanding about the hieroglyphs that would otherwise never have happened, or at least would have taken much longer. One comment heard this year was that there seemed to be less of that kind of exchange in the sessions than there used to be. Thus, it was a thrill during the very last session on Sunday that members of the audience began to speak up and contribute their insights, knowledge and expertise on the subject at hand. I was awed to realize just how many of the audience around where I sat were well-known archaeologists! Voices

spoke up from all over the auditorium adding their specific point that further enhanced the presentation.

The sessions opened on Friday covering new research and reports from the field. Sites and themes included Calakmul and its murals, imagery depicting the sun god symbolism at Yaxchilan, Palenque, San Bartolo and others, the present-day Lacandon and their relationship with the ruins at Palenque and Yaxchilan, and a contemporary look at the river region.

Saturday and Sunday, the presentations on the three subject sites yielded many new details. David Stuart’s contribution centered around the place names and political relationships/royal houses of Piedras Negra and Yaxchilan with other peripheral locals. Of most interest was his treatment of the second of the two Emblem Glyphs at Yaxchilan—Muluc—never using the name, referring to it instead as “the second glyph,” “the second one,” “the other entity,” etc., and calling into question the previous translation of this glyph. Sherrie Smith will report on this in the next issue of *glyph notes* so you won’t want to miss that!

I was awed to realize just how many of the audience around where I sat were well-known archaeologists!

We learned of spatial patterning and political boundaries that revealed a picture of complex interactions and influence, particularly relating to Regional Capitals (Yaxchilan, Piedras Negras, Pomoná), with new information on the secondary centers under their domain. One of the most exciting presentations covered Pre-Classic secondary centers (c 500 BC-AD 250) which were not only fortified but abandoned at the end of that period. This information dra-

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The River Cities

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Don Beebe



Usumacinta River winding its way from the highlands of Guatemala into the lowlands of Mexico.

matically coincides with the Nephite/Lamanite war and Nephite expulsion from the Land Southward. We look forward to Lyle Smith's article in the next *glyph notes* which will introduce details on these sites and their Book of Mormon correlation. As a side note, other sites along the Usumacinta River region show an interestingly consistent accession of rulers after the Nephites have fled to the Land Northward.

The final presentation on Sunday also proved to be very informative on the recently excavated site of Pomoná. Located just west of the Usumacinta River in a smaller river valley which runs directly


west toward Palenque; it was called a "great kingdom" by archaeologist Peter Matthews. One of the most interesting details was an early date which correlates to AD 41 referring to Ruler 1. Following a gap, dates associated with subsequent rulers continue at AD 179, AD 297, AD 305, AD 435 and 453, on through to AD 830. Much more work remains to be done at this site, and we look

forward to the results in the future.

As new details emerge from the Pre-Classic period in the Maya area, it is exciting to see the correspondence to The Book of Mormon events, adding growing confirmation of the history in its pages.

For more information, consult the following websites:

- www.utmaya.org
- www.mesoweb.com/pair/journal
- www.famsi.org/reports

 **glyph**
calendar
F E B R U A R Y - M A Y

2nd
Tuesday

PSI Series of Classes
7:00 pm
South Crysler
Restoration Branch
Fellowship Hall
Independence, MO

Feb. 27 -
May 29

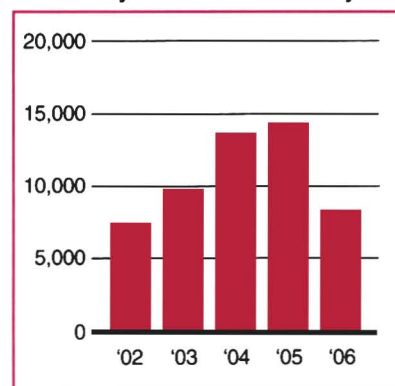
See Presenters and
Topics in Jan/Feb issue
(subject to change)

Contact Don Beebe at
816-796-4094,
or Lyle Smith at
816-229-5192
for more information.

SUPPORT UPDATE
2006

thank you

Yearly Income Summary



I strongly believe that you can never say "thank you" too much. So, Thank You, Thank You, Thank You to all who have helped support PSI over the past year. Although our contributions for the past year have dropped drastically and have not kept pace with rising costs, we truly appreciate each gift. We recognize that budgets are tight for most families and that pleas for monetary support continue to pour in from all directions. In previous years, PSI faced the possibility of not being able to continue publication of its newsletter *glyph notes*, but our supporters came through—and we trust that this will be the case again. If you have not already done so, won't you please take a moment to update your subscription to the newsletter now? A self-addressed envelope is provided in this issue for your convenience. Again, we thank each and every one of you who have been faithful supporters of Book of Mormon research over the years. As is penned in the song, *We Limit Not the Truth of God*, "The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from his word" (Hymns of the Restoration, p.197).

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glyph clips

By Lyle Smith

◆ Desert River

On April 2, 2006, the ancient water channel at Wadi Qumran in the Judean desert flowed with water. Flash flooding can take place in the desert. When that happens, dry riverbeds run with water. This reminds us of Lehi telling of the river of water in the desert.

The BAR Companion, April 7, 2006,
www.newsletter@bib-arch.org

◆ New Olmec Site Discovered

A 2,500-year old city influenced by the Olmecs, often referred to as the "mother culture" of Mesoamerica, has been discovered 25 miles south of Mexico City. Zazacatla covered about a square mile and dates to 800 to 500 B.C. Six buildings have been uncovered and two sculptures which appear to be Olmec style priests. This past summer Don Beebe and I visited another older Olmec site, Teopantecuanitlan, which is about 130 miles south of Mexico City. It dates to 1,800 B.C. almost 4,000 years ago.

FOXnews.com
January 28, 2007

◆ Egyptian Script Used for Semitic Language

Professor Richard Steiner of New York's Yeshiva University reports that a 5,000-year old Semitic text dealing with magical spells and snakes has been deciphered from an ancient Egyptian pyramid inscription. Although written in Egyptian characters, the texts turned out to be composed in the Semitic language spoken by the Canaanites of the third millennium B.C., an archaic form of Hebrew. Here we have the same thing happening that Nephi did, writing in Egyptian using the Hebrew language.

Jerusalem Post, Online Edition,
January 23, 2007

◆ Essene Settlement or Not?

In "Was It an Essene Settlement?," by Alan Crown and Lena Cansdale, the authors present evidence that leads them to believe Qumran was not an Essene settlement as believed for so many years. Qumran, the site near where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, was not an isolated religious community of the Essene sect, and the scrolls should no longer be regarded as reflecting this group's doctrine. My personal opinion (Lyle Smith) is that too much has been made of the Essene connection. This article is worth reading.

Crown, Alan and Cansdale, Lena, "Was It an Essene Settlement?" BAS Retrospective, no. 20, <http://www.bib-arch.org/Retrospective>

◆ Underwater Site near the Suez Canal

The Egyptian authorities have given permission for underwater exploration of what appears to be a Roman city submerged in the Mediterranean, about twenty miles east of the Suez Canal on Egypt's north coast. Remains of buildings, bathrooms, a fortress, ancient coins, bronze vases and pieces of pottery, dating to Roman times 30 B.C. to A.D. 337 have already been found. When we hear of sunken cities we think of the destruction at the time of Christ's death. Remember ruins of cities underwater have been found on the north and east coast of the Yucatan peninsula as well as in some lakes in northern Guatemala.

Reuters, May 22, 2006

◆ Jerusalem Temple Mount Discoveries

Among finds uncovered in rubble removed from the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in recent years include the following.

The imprint of a seal thought to have belonged to a priestly Jewish family mentioned book of Jeremiah in the Old Testament.

A mother-of-pearl cross left by early Christians of the Byzantine period, with an engraving of the figure of Jesus.

Coins from the Jewish revolt that preceded the destruction of the Second Temple by Roman legions in A.D. 70 emblazoned with the words "Freedom of Zion."

International Herald Tribune,
November 17, 2006

◆ Oldest Observatory in the Americas

Archaeologists working high in the Peruvian Andes have discovered the oldest celestial observatory in the Americas. The 4,200-year-old structure (2,200 B.C.) marking the summer and winter solstices is as old as the stone pillars of Stonehenge. It was built on the top of a 33-foot-high pyramid. Remember that the Olmecs and their predecessors were quite active in Mesoamerica by this time and may well have been building observatories too.

Kansas City Star, May 15, 2006

From Our Readers

Recently I read one of your glyph notes, A Book of Mormon Report. I would appreciate being put on your mailing list to receive copies in the future. I find this an excellent paper.

JLH, Independence, MO

Myles and I enjoy your magazine very much! We have sold our home and are moving to the Temple Square area!!! Can you tell that we're a little excited? Thank you for all of the hard work you do to make the magazine a success.

M & RM, Independence, MO

4 glyph notes

a Message from the President

Dear Friends,

Many of you do not know me personally. This letter is my opportunity to share with you why I cherish *The Book of Mormon*, am a co-founder of Pre-Columbian Studies Institute (PSI), and work each day to provide opportunities for others to learn more about the precious gospel contained within its pages.

In 1984 I suffered a mild heart attack. The reality of brushing so close to death at a young age caused me to sink into depression—I had believed (erroneously) that I was indestructible. My wife, Pat, and I attended a service at our local reunion in 1986. Lyle and Sherrie Smith (fellow co-founders of PSI) were there and announced that they were planning a tour to Mesoamerica. They invited me to come along and even suggested I bring my camera! That tour began what still continues today: seeing and photographing the evidences of other sheep [John 10:16 IV] who Christ said, “I have, which are not of this fold.” As a Book of Mormon believer, I look for evidence of these “sheep” who were led out of the Old World into a Land of Promise.

Having seen so many marvelous artifacts while touring, I often say in presentations, “I think there is more physical evidence that Christ was in the New World than he was in Israel.” And, I believe he was in Israel. PSI’s mission continues to assist in turning your faith into knowledge and your knowledge into action. It is our hope, as we continue to share with you breaking discoveries and heart-felt testimonies concerning the truthfulness of *The Book of Mormon* through glyph notes, that your faith has been strengthened.

Our Lord demonstrated so aptly the necessity of working together for the common cause. He gave each of us different gifts, talents, and responsibilities because he understood one person cannot do it alone—it takes all to share the story. Sharing the powerful message of *The Book of Mormon* involves YOU! We are so thankful you have helped us with your contributions so that we can send Book of Mormon related information to others who do not know and/or desire to know more.

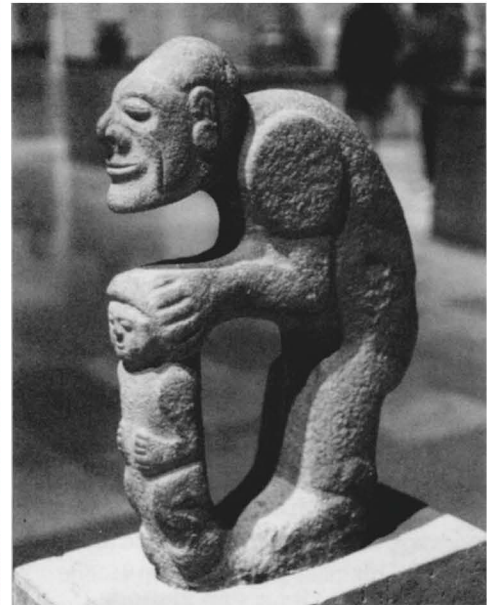
PSI’s small all-volunteer staff cannot do it alone nor finance it all. That is why it is so important to have those of you who contribute on a regular basis. We want to say thank you for your part in assisting PSI with this great and exciting work.

Seven contributors gave \$1,000 or more this past year with others giving \$500 or more. Some indicated their contribution was a portion of their tithe. We treasure their trust.

I hear many say they always look forward to the next issue of glyph notes, and they “devour” it. We also appreciate that kind of enthusiasm. My hope is that the Lord will move upon you as he has moved upon me, and that your thirst to know and do more for Him cannot be quenched.

If you value the gift of *The Book of Mormon* and what PSI can do to spread its message, won’t you please help us share with those who don’t know of the mounting evidence which supports it? An enclosed self-addressed envelope is provided for you to send your contribution for the work so that we “...shall testify to the truth of the book and the things therein [2 NE 11:133].

Bonds in faith,
Donald A. Beebe, President
Pre-Columbian Studies Institute



“...We viewed in the Jalapa Museum in Mexico a large stone statue of a man placing his hands on a child’s head which appears to reflect the practice of the ordinance of laying on of hands.” Barent Eliason, “Jesus Visited America: A Testimony,” *glyph notes*, Jan/Feb 2001.

The Book of Mormon [is] our ‘faith blueprint.’ Faith is the mechanism—held up by hope—that produces evidences from the unseen to the seen.” Shirley Heater, “Book of Mormon Archaeology & Faith: New Perspective - Part 2,” *glyph notes*, Sept/Oct 2006

“...We viewed in the Jalapa Museum

*“...no matter how much archaeologists may scorn *The Book of Mormon*, each new discovery brings them closer to the things which it has claimed all along.....There is scarcely any other area of archaeology where interpretation and ideas have changed so completely as in the field of Maya studies. It is entirely appropriate to speak of a paradigm shift.” Glenn A. Scott, “*New History Parallels the Nephite Record: A Book Review*,” *glyph notes*, Mar/Apr 2003.*

Don Beebe



Creation text on Stele C, Quirigua, Guatemala.

“Echoes of the Genesis account of creation reverberate throughout Maya Creation texts and legends. ...Within the last 20 years, great progress has been made in deciphering the Maya hieroglyphs so that now about 95 percent is understood. ...Elements of the Maya creation accounts along with other aspects ... provide evidence that the Mayas were indeed the people we find in *The Book of Mormon*.” Sherrie Kline Smith, “*Maya Creation Texts*,” *glyph notes*, July/Aug 1998.



Cerro Rabon, Mexico

“From *The Book of Mormon* we know that the Jaredites and the Nephites both had their final battles on the same battlefield. ...On the 2003 expedition to Cerro Rabon, which we believe to be Hill Cumorah, our team found many artifacts which give strong support to the theory that this particular mountain was Cumorah as described in *The Book of Mormon*.” Neil Steede, “*Cumorah—A Great Battlefield*,” *glyph notes*, Jul/Aug 2003.

“*And it came to pass* glyph was one of the great breakthroughs in understanding Maya writing.” Tim and Jennifer Raffety, “*A Most Powerful “Proof” of The Book of Mormon’s Authenticity*,” *glyph notes*, Nov/Dec 1998.

Don Beebe

“*And it came to pass*” glyph (lower right) housed in museum at Palenque, Mexico

Don Beebe



Now called the Avenue of the Dead, it was once the main highway through the great city of Teotihuacan northeast of Mexico City.

“*The Book of Mormon* is full of many short references that can lead to long studies. One example concerns highways and roads...These comments [from *The Book of Mormon*, 3 Nephi 3:8; 4:11] are close to the time that Christ appeared in *Land Bountiful*, which indicates that almost two thousand years ago the people of *The Book of Mormon* had a system of highways.” Lyle Smith, “*Ancient Highways*,” *glyph notes* Mar/Apr 1999.

Full Color Photographs of Well-known Sites in Mesoamerica



Kukulcan Pyramid, Chichen Itza, Mexico

Pre-Columbian Studies Institute is pleased to announce the release of a limited-edition of color photographs of well-known sites in Mesoamerica.

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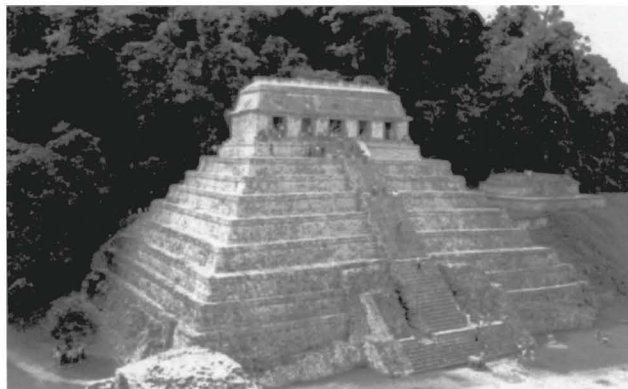
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Temple One, Tikal, Guatemala



Memories from Mesoamerica



Guatemala and Honduras, 2005 Joel Davis, Graceland College

I knelt down at the roots of a colossal tree on the brink of the jungle; my face was down to the earth, and I poured out the desires of my heart to the Lord. Tomorrow was the day we were to visit the Lost City in Tikal, which is a site that was erected before the time of Christ, meaning Jesus himself could have possibly walked where we were soon to walk. I prayed for God's Spirit to visit us with power so we would know with assurance that Christ was there. After being immersed in The Book of Mormon for several days, I had great faith that something amazing would occur in the morning.

It was the dry season in Mesoamerica, yet early that morning it poured vigorously. It continued to rain, yet more gently, as we proceeded to walk through the jungle to the Lost City. When we arrived at the site, I didn't have a memorable spiritual experience, and I was unable to sense the power of the Spirit—all I felt was a burning in my thighs from climbing to the top of the temple. However, that night I recorded in my journal the following passage: "All morning it rained. I don't know if that meant anything or not, but it stood out in my mind."

After returning to Graceland, I went over to the Shaw's home to visit with Faye and Gaylord and to seek some counsel from their wisdom. I had them examine the patriarchal blessing I received before Christmas break, and it advised me to seek the ways in which the Spirit speaks to me. So, I asked Faye how the Spirit speaks to her, and she recounted several ways in

which it did. However, one of the ways stuck out in my mind—soft, gentle rain. She has had experiences in which God answered her prayers with gentle rain, and it was impressed upon her by the Spirit that the rain is reminiscent of the love and blessings of God being showered upon her. It wasn't until I reread my journal and had this discussion at the Shaw's that I realized my prayers weren't in vain that night in the jungle of Tikal. God was listening and He responded by pouring out His eternal love and blessings in the form of rain upon our group.

The trip to the lands of Mesoamerica was primarily intended to study its relationship to The Book of Mormon—to examine archaeological evidence in the form of geography, writing systems, and artwork, to walk on the Promised Land itself, and to bring The Book of Mormon to life. We witnessed a stone carving, or stela, that shared a creation story paralleling the Inspired Version. We saw numerous glyphs of a hand with a hole in it and other glyphs that have been translated to mean "And it came to pass." Yes, these things were amazing, but the trip was more than a scramble to find evidence and prove the truthfulness of The Book of Mormon.

The trip was about people who never knew each other before, knitting together lasting relationships. It was about the young assisting the "well-aged" up and down the slippery rocks—hand-in-hand and step-by-step. It was about the older folks sharing their wisdom and encouraging the youth to delve deeper into the Scriptures and to find purpose in living for Christ. It was about cultural appreciation and learning to find joy in life through the smiles of young children who have virtually nothing. Even more-so for myself, it was a journey to discover how to listen to God's Spirit, and it was a wake-up call to faith and repentance.

Often times, I would get hungry waiting for dinner every night; however, I noticed whenever I was feasting on God's word I was no longer hungry. I was filled as the sacred words nourished my soul. I failed to

sense the Spirit while visiting the Maya ruins, but It came alive and present each time I read the Book of Mormon. I felt the frustration of Nephi with his brothers, who continually rebelled against God. I was there, camped out around the temple to hear King Benjamin's final sermon. I was with Alma as he fled from King Noah and led hundreds of people into the covenant relationship at the Waters of Mormon. I became a character in The Book of Mormon! Sadly, however, this confronted me with a harsh realization.

When reading through The Book of Mormon I noticed a pattern. A righteous man would come along preaching the gospel, many people would be converted, some churches would be established, and there would be peace for the space of a few years. Then, some stiff-necked, hard-hearted people brought about contentions and perverted the ways of the Lord. Next, there was usually a war, and the cycle of repentance, peace, and wickedness started all over. Praise God for His patience and mercy because I was getting annoyed, thinking to myself, "Won't these people ever learn?" Then it hit me. I am the stiff-necked person causing all the troubles. I am the one making God say, "Won't he ever learn?" Therefore, I invite you to explore the pages of the Book of Mormon and see what marvelous work the Lord will bring forth in your life. Be prepared because your eyes will be opened, your spirit will be renewed, and you will be called into action!

Graceland College has contacted Pre-Columbian Studies Institute to conduct another tour during the Winter Inter-term, 2008, for students who are interested in visiting Mesoamerica.



glyph quotes

“...I am with you always...” — Matt 28:19



By Clyde Noren

When Jesus first informed the disciples of His leaving them for a little while, and then returning after a little while, as recorded in John 16:18, the disciples were very upset and puzzled. They remarked, “We cannot tell what he saith.” Earlier, Jesus had told them that He must leave in order for the Comforter to come to them. It was natural for them to put a physical interpretation on his words, such as the coming of a peaceful and more rewarding life, but they were to learn that the Comforter was to be a spiritual assurance that He would always be with them. The profound impact and depth of the meaning of the Comforter did not come until after Christ’s resurrection, the occasion being the Day of Pentecost. At that time the Apostles spoke in different tongues and were understood by each person in their own language through the gift and Power of the Holy Ghost. The people felt the closeness and presence of the Lord at all times and responded to that spiritual encouragement. Acts 2:46 illustrates “And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.”

A similar closeness and daily contact with the Lord happened during the Golden Age of the Nephites as described in 4 Nephi:1. The account was a striking resemblance to the Day of Pentecost. 4 Nephi, 1:4 reads, “And they had all things common among them, therefore they were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free and partakers of the heavenly gift.” That gift being the Spirit of the Comforter was exhibited in the Power of the Holy Ghost. Verse 19 in the same chapter relates, “And surely there could not be a happier people who had been created by the hand of God.” These results confirm that the Comforting Spirit and Love of Christ were always available to the faithful Nephites.

Ministers of our times who were blessed with testimonies of the Lord’s closeness are the stalwarts who have ministered to us many times. We remember the ministry of Apostle Arthur Oakman and his missionary call to England and Germany in the early part of World War II. He was detained by the Nazis, interrogated, and asked if he was preaching the coming of a Kingdom, strong and mighty. He did not back down and was freed and allowed to go on his way. He was

comforted and testified that he was blessed by the peaceful assurance that the Lord was with him all the way. His ministry was strengthened, and he continued to share the Lord and His abiding spirit with all.

Each month as we enter into our Sacrament Service, the ministers pray over the emblems asking the Father that the partakers of such important emblems may always have the Spirit of the Son to be with them. Therefore by partaking we also receive the assurance that He is with us always.

The Easter Season brings to Christian minds the shattering and cruel event of the Crucifixion and the glorious miracle of the Resurrection. The call of these Easter events is for all believers to continue in faith to follow the teachings and commandments of Jesus. We can expect the same spirit that occurred at the Day of Pentecost because of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost and the Comforter through the endless love of Jesus. Jesus is with us always, now and into eternity.

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