

December 28, 2003

Dear Family

Kristi called on a December morning about 6:30 am. Their car wouldn't start. She has to do some things for work and Nate has got to go to class. They had already jumped the car and then Nate sat in it running for an hour - studying for a test - to see if he could charge the battery. It didn't work. The car still wouldn't start. That night Travis called talking about a water leak in their basement apartment. The renters discovered a puddle of water on the kitchen floor. Val needs to come to Utah for her babyshower. But the leak needs to be fixed first. RicAnn called on her cell phone in tears. She was sitting in the police car. She had just been in an accident on I-15. She hit the guy in front of her. We've all experienced those times in our lives when we've had serious problems perhaps even deaths or accidents or sicknesses or just those times that daily trials and tribulations seem too hard to bare. At these times we often ask ourselves questions like "Why me?" "Why now?" and perhaps most important "How am I going to deal with this?" Recently for my scripture reading I've been using the Book of Mormon. I was again amazed at how frequently the phrase "*It came to pass*" occurred. Mark Twain once joked that if Joseph Smith had left out the many instances of "*and it came to pass*" from the Book of Mormon, the book would have been only a pamphlet. (*Roughing It*, Hartford, Conn.: American Publishing Co., 1901, p. 133.) Repetition in scripture is always a sign of importance. Certainly the Lord would not repeat Himself for no reason. On the contrary, there is never anything vain about repetition in the scriptures. Even the Savior himself taught strongly against "*vain repetitions*" (Matt. 6:7). Of all the things the Lord wants us to know, I'm confident He is very aware of the productive use of the sacred space in the scriptures. In case of "*It came to pass...*" the repetition is of extreme significance for us in our daily living. In the LDS Scriptures we find the phrase "*It came to pass...*" 1,886 times. We find the word "*Christ*" only 1,098 times. Why? What is so important about these four simple words that the Lord wishes to remind us over and over and over again? The English translation of the Hebrew word *wayehi* - - is "*and it came to pass.*" It is typically used to connect two ideas or events performing a transitional function. What two ideas or events are associated with the phrase "*it came to pass?*" The first important element of the phrase is the word "It." The specific characteristics of our trials and tribulations



can be referred to as an "*it.*" What better word can be found to represent the variety of trials and tribulations we experience. "*Some are tested by poor health, some by a body that is deformed or homely. Others are tested by handsome and healthy bodies; some by the passion of youth; others by the erosions of old age. Some suffer disappointments in marriage, family problems; others live in poverty and obscurity. Some find ease and luxury. All are part of the test...*" (Elder Packer, The Choice Ensign Nov. 1980, pg. 21) Things happen. "*In the world ye shall have tribulation*" John 16:33. There is no way any of us can escape the "its" of mortality. Sometimes the "It" can seem overwhelming and impossible to endure. Other times the "Its" may appear small and no big deal. Some of us act as if the gospel is suppose to be an immunization program that should prevent pain and suffering! And that faithful members of the Church don't experience divorce, addiction, suicide, mental illness, wayward children or physical disabilities. And furthermore, all pain and suffering happens to "bad" people and is due to wickedness and sin. Although it is true that the consequence of sin and wickedness will eventually bring pain; it is *not* true that we are immuned from trials and tribulations by living a righteous life! Speaking of the faithful members of the Church, the Lord has made it clear "*My people must be tried in all things.*" (D & C 136:31). Furthermore, "*The story of Job in the Old Testament relates three of the great tests we all should be prepared to face at some period in our lives. First, temporal setbacks. Job lost all he owned. Second, physical illness that will test our faith and testimony. And third, depression. Job said, 'Why died I not from the womb?' (Job 3:11.) 'My soul is weary of my life.' (Job 10:1.) But the great lesson of Job is that, 'in all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.' (Job 1:22.) Too often when adversity strikes, we use it as a justification to commit sin and turn away from the teachings of Jesus Christ, the prophets who lead*



us, and our family and friends. Job maintained his testimony and was blessed for his unwavering faith that God lived and that he would dwell in God's presence." (Robert D. Hales, "Examples from the Life of a Prophet," *Ensign*, Nov. 1981) Rather than the gospel of Jesus Christ being an immunization program; it is better viewed as a mental health insurance plan. A promise that *if* we pay our premiums-study the scriptures, pray, obey the commandments- then the insurance program will give us strength and courage to cope with our trials and tribulations! The fact that "its" will come into our lives is the first idea or event characterized in the phrase "It came to pass." So what is the second fundamental truth of this phrase? To what is "it" connected? To where does "it" transition? What doctrine is being taught here? Simple, the second element is found in the last part of the phrase-that trials and tribulations will "pass." That's when the miracle occurs, when we move from the "its" of our



lives, to one of *hope and faith* that they will *pass*. For some it may be difficult to transition from a trial or tribulation to a position of hope and faith. But not for Anjie and Brian (Hawks). Brian is the Elder's quorum president and Anjie is a stay-at-home mom. They are the proud parents of Brad and Isaac. (And I do mean proud!) Isaac was born June 2, 2002 after a very rapid labor. He appeared healthy, just didn't cry much. Then he had no interest in eating. Later they noticed that he gagged a lot. As time went on they noticed he wasn't responding or tracking anything with his eyes. (They eventually learned he was legally blind.) He is 18 months now. The recent MRI showed hypoplastic cerebellum and de myelination. Doctors are "leaning towards" a diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy. In Anjie's diary for this Christmas Day she wrote about Isaac's new "inclined floor" he got for Christmas: "...It is just a padded ramp that we set up on a chair. I put him at the top and his legs started kicking (each taking a turn, separately!!) and he started moving!! This is so exciting. It will teach his body how to

move and figure out what his legs and arms can do. When he gets good, we will lower it. It takes him about 5 to 10 minutes to get to the bottom and it is 8 feet long. He has gone down twice today!! When he reaches the bottom we pick him up and give him tons of praise and love. We swing him and give him kisses..." Anjie and Brian became very excited about Isaac's progress and talk about a special program in Philadelphia for brain injured children they plan to attend. (To learn more about Isaac check-out his very own web site and listen to his birthday song.

<http://cryd.freeshell.org/isaac>). We may not always know when and how, but in time the "its" will pass. Yes, every single one of them - some because of the resurrection, some because of the atonement and some because of the passing of time. Imagine those seemingly overwhelming challenges here on earth will someday be gone. The lame shall walk, the ill shall be made well, the dead shall live again etc. etc. The Prophet Joseph Smith was counseled: "My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; And then, if thou endure **IT** well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes. Thy friends do stand by thee, and they shall hail thee again with warm hearts and friendly hands." (D&C 121:7-9.) The Lord knows by overcoming and enduring pain and adversity we cleanse our souls and strengthen our faith and testimony. In these few words "It came to pass..." we are asked to make the transition from the "it" to "its" passing. It is endurance with hope and faith that make that transition. Hope and faith are necessary weapons in the hand-to-hand combat to overcome the frustration, despair and depression sometimes associated with "its" of our lives. "Everybody in this life has their challenges and difficulties. That is part of our mortal test. The reason for some of these trials cannot be readily understood except on the basis of faith and hope because there is often a larger purpose which we do not always understand. Peace comes through hope." (James E. Faust, "Hope, an Anchor of the Soul," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 59) Our Heavenly Father was wise to repeat the phrase "it came to pass" hundreds of times throughout the scriptures, sharing with us pure and simple doctrine to live by. It is not enough simply to be a member of the Church. The power to endure trials and tribulations come only when we walk the gospel path. Our membership and activity in the Church should serve as the means to that end; they are not ends in themselves. Remember life isn't about the wrecked car, the broken femur, the death or disability "IT'S" about you and I, and our personal ability to look beyond the moment and see our eternal destiny and realize that regardless of the trial no matter the tribulation we are facing ...



**It came to pass...
it came to pass...**

