

# GENERAL CONFERENCE

OF

## THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS.

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### FIRST DAY.

The Seventy-fourth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, at 10 a.m. on Sunday, April 3rd, 1904, President Joseph F. Smith presiding.

#### THE PROCEEDINGS.

There were present of the general authorities: Of the First Presidency, Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder and Anthon H. Lund. Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles; Francis M. Lyman, Abraham O. Wooruff, Rudger Clawson, Hyrum M. Smith and George A. Smith. Presiding Patriarch, John Smith. First Seven Presidents of Seventies: Seymour B. Young, Brigham H. Roberts, George Reynolds, J. Golden Kimball, Rulon S. Wells, and Joseph W. McMurrin. Of the Presiding Bishopric: William B. Preston, Robert T. Burton and Orrin P. Miller. There were likewise many presidents of stakes, their counselors, presidents of missions and other leading men of the Priesthood.

The choir and congregation sang the hymn which begins:

"Come, come, ye Saints, no toil nor labor fear,

But with joy wend your way."

The opening prayer was offered by Elder Joseph E. Taylor.

Singing by the choir, the anthem:

"From afar, gracious Lord, Thou hast gathered Thy flock."

#### PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH.

##### OPENING ADDRESS.

Guiding care and mercy of the Almighty—His requirements of the Latter-day Saints—Condition of the unbelieving—Nature of the Holy Priesthood—The government of God means freedom—The Saints look forward to and long for its establishment.

Feeling very greatly dependent upon the mercies of the Lord for the guiding influence of His Holy Spirit, I am delighted this morning to welcome this vast congregation of Latter-day Saints to the opening meeting of this seventy-fourth annual conference of the Church.

We begin our conference on this beautiful morning, I firmly believe, under the divine approval, blessing and favor of Almighty God, who has guided the destiny of His people from the organization of the Church until the present, and whose overruling power has preserved us from the hands of our enemies and guided us in our footsteps and in our journeyings into the tops of these mountains. Here, by His blessing, we have had a measure of peace for lo these many years. We have been permitted to grow and increase in numbers, and, as I believe, in faith, intelligence and in a better and broader understanding of the principles of life and salvation which have been restored to the earth in the latter day, through the administration of divine messengers to man and through the divine calling, appointment and inspira-

tion of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his co-laborers in this work, whom the Lord prepared in the beginning and fitted, by the power and influence of His Spirit upon them, for the ministry which they were called to fill and perform in the Church.

It has not been by the wisdom of man that this people have been directed in their course until the present; it has been by the wisdom of Him who is above man and whose knowledge is greater than that of man, and whose power is above the power of man; for it is unto God, our Father, we are indebted for the mercies we have enjoyed and for the present prosperous condition of the people of God throughout this intermountain region and throughout the world. The hand of the Lord may not be visible to all. There may be many who can not discern the workings of God's will in the progress and development of this great latter-day work, but there are those who see in every hour and in every moment of the existence of the Church, from its beginning until now, the overruling, almighty hand of Him who sent His Only Begotten Son to the world to become a sacrifice for the sin of the world, that as He was lifted up so He, by reason of His righteousness and power and the sacrifice which He has made, might lift up unto God all the children of men who would hearken to His voice, receive His message and obey His law.

My heart swells with gratitude to God, my Heavenly Father, for His loving kindness and mercy to His people and to the people of our nation and, indeed, to the people of the whole world. I can see the hand-dealing of the Lord not only with us, a little handful of people in the midst of these mountains, but also with the great nation of which we are a part—I was going to say an insignificant part, but I will not qualify this remark in that way. I think also that I can discern the hand of the Lord in His dealings with other nations of the earth, and I fully believe that He, and not the wisdom of men, is shaping the ends or

destinies of the nations of the earth for the accomplishment of His purposes in the latter days. Not only are we the people of God, but all the inhabitants of the world are His children, and all men in every land and in every clime who will humble themselves before the Lord and acknowledge Him are entitled to a measure of His blessing, favor, mercy and protection. The Lord will look after them and will overrule circumstances for their good, as He has overruled, in a greater measure, circumstances for the good of His people who have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice, who have obeyed the voice of the Spirit unto them, and have yielded submission to the laws of the Gospel and become members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, by faith, repentance of sin, and the ordinances of the Gospel that have been instituted by which mankind may be initiated into the family of God and become His sons and His daughters, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

I desire to express to you, my brethren and sisters who are here today, my firm and fixed conviction that God, the Eternal Father, is constantly mindful of you. He is mindful of His people throughout all this land, and he will reward you according to your faithfulness in observing the laws of righteousness and of truth. No man need fear in his heart when he is conscious of having lived up to the principles of truth and righteousness as God has required it at his hands, according to his best knowledge and understanding. I do not suppose that you think or that anyone will think that we esteem ourselves as perfect, or as different and apart from other people of the world. We are, indeed, I am sorry to say, altogether too much like the rest of the world in many respects. We are people with like passions, like weaknesses, like imperfections—no, doubt, results of human nature—as the rest of mankind. But the difference lies here: We have made a covenant in our hearts with God, the Eternal Father, that we will forsake sin; that we will eschew the

very appearance of evil, as far as we possibly can; that we will overcome to the utmost our weakness and proneness to evil and wrong-doing, that we will seek light from all sources of light and intelligence; that we will seek knowledge that comes from above, and hold our ears open to listen to the words of truth, to the voice of understanding, and to the voice of inspiration that comes from the Lord, or that may come from man, inspiring men to do better, to improve, to advance in the scale of righteousness and of intelligence in the world; and that we will keep ourselves, as far as it is possible for us to do so, clean and pure and unspotted from the sins of the world. That is the difference. We have covenanted with God that we will do this, and we expect that God will require us to keep this covenant that we have made with Him, and that we will strive with all our might to live consistent lives before the Lord and keep His laws.

It is hard, very hard indeed, to make the blind see or the deaf hear; and it is a truth laid down in the doctrines of the Gospel as taught to the ancient Nephites upon this continent, that there are none so blind as those who will not see, and there are none so deaf as those who will not hear. There are those who will not see and who will not hear, and it is vain to attempt to open their eyes, for they will to keep them shut. It is vain that we attempt to open their ears to hear, for they have closed their ears against the everlasting truth and they will not hear it. What are we to do under such circumstances as these? Are we to grieve about it? Shall we slacken our effort in the least because these conditions exist in the world? Shall we turn back from the plow to which we have put our hand because there are those in the world that will not see the truth and will not hear the voice of the Spirit of God calling them to repentance and to obey the commandments of the Lord? Verily no! He would be a weak and vacillating and an unprofitable servant who would turn

away from righteousness because there are those who will not repent of their sins and turn unto righteousness.

Our duty is to keep steadily on—and upward in the direction that the Lord Almighty has marked out for us to pursue. Keep the faith; honor the name of God in your hearts; revere and love the name of Him whose blood was shed for the remission of sins for the world; honor and hold in the highest esteem him whom God raised up in his childhood to lay the foundations of this great latter-day work; honor that power and that authority which we call the Holy Priesthood, which is after the order of the Son of God, and which has been conferred upon man by God Himself. Honor that Priesthood. What is that Priesthood? It is nothing more and nothing less than divine authority committed unto man from God. That is the principle that we should honor. We hold the keys of that authority and Priesthood ourselves; it has been conferred upon the great masses of the Latter-day Saints. It has, indeed, I may say, been bestowed upon many that were not worthy to receive it and who have not magnified it and who have brought disgrace upon themselves and upon the Priesthood which was conferred upon them. The Priesthood of the Son of God cannot be exercised in any degree of unrighteousness; neither will its power, its virtue and authority abide with him who is corrupt, who is treacherous in his soul toward God and toward his fellowmen. It will not abide in force and power with him who does not honor it in his life by complying with the requirements of heaven.

Some people think it is a dreadful sin for a people like the Latter-day Saints to claim that they believe with all their souls that the world would be better if only the laws of God could be enforced in the world. Some people think that if God's authority, if God's law, if God's righteousness were to be enforced among the children of men that it would deprive men of their liberties, it would bring them into bond-



age, and that it would debase and de-grade them. We do not look at this in this way. We believe that God's will is to exalt men; that the liberty that comes through obedience to the Gos-pel of Jesus Christ is the greatest measure of liberty that can come to man. There is no liberty that men en-joy or pretend to enjoy in the world that is not founded in the will and in the law of God and that does not have truth for its underlying principle and foundation. It is error that makes bondsmen. It is untruth that degrades mankind. It is error and the lack of knowledge of God's laws and God's will that leaves men in the world on a par with the brute creation; for they have no higher instincts, no higher principle, no higher incentive, no higher aspira-tion than the brute world if they have not some inspiration that comes from a higher source than man himself.

I believe in God's law. I believe that it is His right to rule in the world. I believe that no man has or should have any valid objection in his mind to the government of God, and the rule of Jesus Christ, in the earth. Let us sup-pose, for a moment, that Christ were here and that He was bearing rule in the world. Who would come under His condemnation? Who would be subject to His chastening word? Who would be in disharmony or unfellowship with God? Would the righteous man? Would the virtuous man? the pure and virtu-ous woman? the pure and the honest in heart? the upright? the straightfor-ward? those who do the will of heaven? Would they be in rebellion to Christ's rule if He were to come here to rule? No. They would welcome the rule and reign of Jesus Christ in the earth. They would welcome His law and acknowl-edge His sovereignty, they would has-ten to rally to His standard and to up-hold the purpose and the perfection of His laws and of His righteousness. Who would then be recreant to the rule of Christ? The whoremonger, the adulterer, the liar, the sorcerer, he who bears false witness against his neigh-ber, he who seeks to take advantage of his brother and who would

overcome and destroy him for his own worldly gain or profit: the murderer, the despiser of that which is good, the unbeliever in the eternities that lie before us, the atheist, perhaps, although I think that he would not be so far from Christ as some that profess to be teachers of His doctrines and advocates of His laws. It would be the rebellious, the wicked, those who would oppress their neighbors and enslave them if they could. Such as these would be the people who would not welcome the reign of Jesus Christ. Are there any who profess to be Latter-day Saints in this class, and would fear to have Christ reign and rule?

Now, we do not claim that God rules in the sense that the world charge us with believing. We do not claim nor profess that Jesus reigns in the earth as the world charge us with believing. We say that we would welcome His reign. We say and we feel in our hearts that we would love to have Him come and reign and rule among men. We say and we believe in our hearts that so far as we overcome our weak-nesses, our imperfections and our re-bellious nature which is against the will of the Father, so far as we are able to subdue the carnal mind and the wick-edness and the weaknesses of human nature with which we are beset, so far as we are able to rise above the grovel-ing condition of fallen man and attain a higher plane, of virtue, honor, purity and righteousness, that so far, and no farther, does Christ, the Son of God, reign in our hearts. And we would to God that we were in such a condition that He would reign supreme over our souls, and over all that we possess. Who shall gainsay this? Who shall say that it is wicked to obey Christ? that it is wrong to follow in His footsteps and obey his laws? We will not say that, and we will not, if we can help it, per-mit ourselves to be crowded into the corner, by which we will have to con-fess that we would rather that hell should reign on earth than that heaven should reign. We would rather that God would reign, that heaven would

smile, that righteousness should prevail, that truth should cover the earth as the waters cover the mighty deep. We would rather that every man and every woman on earth were a child of God and an heir indeed and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. We prefer that. We are working for that; we pray for it; we preach the Gospel for this purpose, and we hope, by the blessing of the Almighty upon our efforts and labors in the world, that before this work shall have completed its mission and the object of its existence in the world, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ, to the honor and glory of God and to the redemption of the world. We are going to keep right on in that line as long as God will give us our liberty and permit us to live in the flesh; and when we shall have finished our mission here and go behind the veil, with the Priesthood that has been conferred upon us here and its keys, authority and power, we will continue to administer for the redemption of those that have died without a knowledge of the truth, in the world of spirits, until every son and daughter of God that has lived upon the earth shall have had the privilege of hearing the sound of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and of embracing it, that their prison doors may be opened, and that liberty may be proclaimed unto them, the liberty of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, wherewith we are made free.

God bless you. May He pour out His Spirit upon His people and help them to be wise and prudent in their words and in their actions. We say to you keep the laws of God, and you should honor and keep the constitutional laws of men. That is what we say.

We say to you, pay your debts and get out of debt. Pay your obligations and free yourselves from the bondage of obligation, if you can, and as soon as you can. We say to you, protect your own faith by Godly lives. We say to you do unto others as you would have them do unto you—in righteousness. We say to you, keep the faith delivered to the Saints in the latter-

day. We say to you, honor God in your lives; honor and love Christ, the Son of God, in your hearts; uphold in honor and maintain respect for the name of Joseph Smith the Prophet of God who was instrumental in laying the foundation of this great latter-day work. Do not turn away at every wind of doctrine or be swayed by the cunning and craftiness of men, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. Know the truth for yourselves. Walk in the light as Christ is in the light, and you will have fellowship with Him, and then the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse you from all sin. God bless you to this end is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The choir then sang the anthem "The Mountain of the Lord's House."

#### PRESIDENT ANTHON H. LUND.

Preparation for the advent of Christ—His death and resurrection—Salvation for the dead.

I greet this congregation in the name of the Lord, and I ask that I may have a share of your faith and prayers while I shall stand before you. I have enjoyed the remarks of our President this morning, and I believe his words have found an echo in every heart. He has portrayed unto us our mission and our duties here upon the earth—that which we are striving for, namely, to serve the Lord, to carry out His purposes, and to be instruments in His hands to bring about the reign of peace, the reign of Christ, here upon the earth. This work in which we are engaged, we have been told, and we have an assurance thereof, is the work which is to prepare men for the second coming of Christ. We believe that the time is near at hand when the prophecies concerning His coming will be fulfilled. We know that before His coming there must be a people prepared to receive Him. We have tried to prepare ourselves, and those amongst whom we labor, for this great event, and we cannot do this in any other way than the one which our President has pointed out to us.

I am reminded that this is Easter. We celebrate today the glorious event, of the resurrection of our Savior. About