

Benediction was pronounced by Elder B. Cecil Gates.

CLOSING SESSION.

In the Tabernacle the conference was called to order at 2 p. m., by President Joseph F. Smith, who presided.

The Tabernacle choir and the congregation sang the hymn: "Zion stands with hills surrounded."

The opening prayer was offered by President Wilford Day, of the Parowan stake of Zion.

A tenor solo, "An Hour of Peace," was sung by James H. Neilson.

ELDER JAMES E. TALMAGE.

Are there few that be saved?—Christ's provisional and incomplete answer in the meridian dispensation—Carried forward in the later dispensation—Another illustrative instance—Sermon of the shepherd and the sheep—Lay hold on eternal life.

At this closing session of the general conference, it is possible to look in retrospect over what has been said in the earlier meetings. I have followed with interest the remarks of every speaker and, as each one closed, I have felt that had I then been called to speak I could have taken up the theme of the discourse and carried it on, having the spirit of it and feeling the genius of it, so full of suggestion and instruction has been every address.

I listened with particular and peculiar interest to the remarks of the brethren this morning relating to science, falsely so-called, and to the truths that have been revealed

respecting man and his position in Nature; and as I have given that subject some attention through many years I was prepared to say something; but I shall content myself now with a simple expression of perfect accord and agreement with the spirit of what was said. We learned from the addresses given this morning a little regarding the origin of man—whence he came; and we have heard through other addresses much as to where he is going. I feel rather inclined to dwell briefly upon the subject of his present duty, the duty of the day and the duty of the hour.

In that regard I remember a very significant question that was submitted to the Christ. We all know how he was subjected to questioning on many occasions, the purpose of the questioner sometimes being to entrap him, if possible, in some incautious word, or to lead him to some overt utterance or act, whereby it was hoped to find excuses for accusation. Some of the questions, however, seemed to have been inspired by worthy intent, and of this kind is the one to which I ask your attention.

As I read in the 13th chapter of Luke, beginning with the 22nd verse—Christ was on his way to Jerusalem, the last journey he was to take through the provinces and up to the capital, for although there were some brief interruptions, this was in effect his march to the cross and to the tomb. He traveled slowly, teaching in the towns, on the high-ways and in the by-ways, wherever people would pause to listen. In the course of such ministry the following incident occurred, as he went through the cities and villages teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem:

"Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved?"

Consider the question. It is just as important today as it was then. It is recorded in the short, lapidar style of the scriptural record, terse, concise, condensed. Putting it into our modern speech, it meant this: Lord, tell us, of the thousands and millions living upon the earth and of the untold myriads that have lived and died and of all that are to come into the flesh, will there be a majority, many, saved, or only a few? Hasn't that question presented itself to you individually? I believe it has come up in the heart of every earnest student of the gospel, of every prayerful investigator of the truth. "Lord, are there few that be saved," or will the most of us be saved and only a few be lost? Note his rejoinder—response—it is not an answer:

"Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them,

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

"When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are.

"Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

"But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

"And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

"And behold there are last which

shall be first, and there are first which shall be last."

I ask your attention to a very grievous mistranslation in that scripture. The error is expressed by misleading punctuation. This division of the scriptures into chapters and verses, is, as you know, a comparatively modern innovation and it has been made by the best skill and wisdom of men, but men's skill sometimes fails and men's wisdom may come to naught. The error in question is none the less grievous because it is one of punctuation only rather than of wording. Here is one of the errors against which we protect ourselves in our declaration of faith when we say, "We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly." We do not follow the mistranslations. This is not peculiarly or particularly "Mormon" criticism. Scholars, theologians, philologists of the day admit the mistake but there it stands. I want to read to you again the passage as it is, and then read it to you as it should be, according to the best authority we have. Christ said to them in response to their question: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able." There endeth the twenty-fourth verse, and the twenty-fifth verse, beginning a new sentence, reads:

"When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door," and so forth. Now, there should be no period there; there should be no division in the verses and the passage should read in this wise:

"Strive to enter in at the strait

gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able when once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door."

Do you see the difference in meaning? One is an indicative statement only, however great its portent; the other brings in the time element and the fact that there is opportunity which will pass—Strive to enter in now because many will come seeking to get in and will not be able when once the master of the house hath risen up and hath shut to the door. It is all in line with the tenor of the scripture, with the words of Paul and the other apostles. Do you call to mind the urgent behest—Lay hold on the kingdom and on eternal life while you can. Don't procrastinate. And that in harmony with the voice of the Book of Mormon prophets—Don't procrastinate the day of your repentance, or you may find it impossible to repent when you would. I commend this scripture to you, as recorded by Luke; but coming back to the question:

Didn't you feel a little disappointed at the fact that Christ did not give a plain answer to that question? I did; I felt disappointed when I first read it, when I first pondered it so far as I can remember, and I have had a little disappointment many times since. Oh, if he had only answered that squarely and definitely, how much more satisfied or dissatisfied, as the case may be, we would severally find ourselves. Will many or only few be saved? Suppose he had answered, Oh, most of you, most of you, there will only be a few lost. Wouldn't we have taken license from it, wouldn't we have given way to carelessness even more

than we do? Suppose he had said—Only a few will be saved and all the great majority will be lost and be forever condemned and be thrust out into outer darkness. What a gloomy picture it would have been. But why didn't Christ answer the question? It seems to have been put in earnestness, it was not a trick question, there does not seem to have been any trap concealed in it: "Lord, are there few that be saved?" Would it not have been an easy matter for him to answer it in a direct way? But he evades it, and gives us a sermon, a very beautiful and encouraging sermon, it is true, one embodying great truth, but it does not answer the question directly, and why? For the reason, the very same reason that operated to cut many another sermon of his so short. Have you not read his sermons and time and time again been disappointed because he closed so abruptly?

Let me digress a moment and illustrate by another incident. Read for yourselves, for I have not time to read it, in the 10th chapter of John, beginning, at the 16th verse. He was delivering at the time there referred to that splendid discourse of his concerning the shepherd and the sheep. He was explaining the difference between a shepherd and a shepherder, a vital difference, and in the course of his remarks, he paused to tell them that there were other sheep not of that fold. Picture him discoursing about himself as the shepherd and about his followers as the sheep. He says in the 15th verse:

"As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep."

Now comes the interpolation:

"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

And now, mark you, that is all he says about that phase, that particular topic. He goes right back to the subject broken off in the earlier verse:

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life."

Now, haven't you wished, when you read that, that you could have heard more? The question naturally arises in our minds, Didn't he possibly say more, which was left out by the recorder? No, he did not. That is all he said about that subject at the time. If you want to read the rest of that sermon, turn to the 15th chapter of the third book of Nephi. That is where he picked it up again and carried it on. Like many another of his sermons, this was begun on one continent and carried on on another, as we find some of his sermons begun in one dispensation and carried forward in a later one. Now, in the 3rd book of Nephi, 15th chapter you will find that Christ picks up the theme of that discourse where he left it off in Jerusalem. Christ there tells his Nephite disciples and the people generally that he had been teaching in Jerusalem according to the commandment of the Father, and he says:

"And not at any time hath the Father given me commandment that I should tell it unto your brethren at Jerusalem;

"Neither at any time hath the Father given me commandment that I should tell unto them concerning the other tribes of the house of Israel, whom the Father hath led away out of the land.

"This much did the Father command me, that I should tell unto them,

"That other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

The next verse explains why he had not said more to the people at Jerusalem:

"And now because of stiffneckedness and unbelief, they understood not my word; therefore I was commanded to say no more of the Father concerning this thing unto them."

Read the intervening verses for yourselves and then note this in the 21st verse:

"And verily I say unto you"—these are his words to the Nephites—"That ye are they of whom I said, other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd."

In the next chapter he carries the same sermon regarding other sheep a little further, and makes plain that there yet are other sheep of still another fold to whom or to which he was then about to go. Thus we find these splendid addresses oft-times divided up—one part in one volume and another part continued in the next.

So it was with this particular sermon regarding the sheep, the shepherd and the sheep-herder, and so regarding this question again, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" He answered it in part, giving the questioner and hearers very direct warning, telling them to enter in at the strait gate while they had a chance, because after the Master of the house hath arisen up and shut to the door they will knock

in vain, and when they plead that they have known him, he will answer that he has never known them. He warns them against assuming that because they had citizenship in Israel they would be saved thereby, and tells them of the dire consequences of their neglect, when they shall see the prophets enter into the place prepared for them and they themselves shut out, when they shall see others coming from the east and from the west and from the north and from the south to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and yet and still and nevertheless, they themselves shut out.

But, as said before, he did not answer the question fully, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" The reason was precisely analogous to that which prevented him from carrying on his sermon regarding those other sheep, because of the people's unbelief, stiffneckedness, and inability to comprehend. Those Jews had been brought up in all the traditions of the law and the thousand and one rules that had been attached to every feature of the law. They believed in a heaven which they called Abraham's bosom, and in a hell, and in no habited space between. Every man, they thought, would go either into that heaven of supreme bliss or into that hell of dire torment; and they were not prepared to know the truth. Now, suppose that Christ had said unto them, "Many will be saved, most of you, will be saved." They would have taken that to mean that many of them, the most of them, practically all of them, would attain that place of bliss to which they referred as Abraham's bosom. If he had told them only few, they would have understood him to mean that the greater part would be consigned to

hell with all its torments. He could not finish the sermon, he could not answer them directly because of their unbelief, because of their willful ignorance, because of their inability to understand him; and you will notice that Christ, the Master of masters, the Teacher of teachers, followed scrupulously the instruction he gave unto his apostles—not to cast pearls before swine nor to throw the great truths of the gospel into the mire, at the feet of those who were not willing to understand.

So, with masterful skill we find him here turning the occasion of this question to good account and preaching a very instructive sermon in connection therewith, but does he never answer the question? Does he let the inquiry go by the board; was it ever to remain unanswered? Not at all. You will find that he has answered that question very fully. Turn to the 76th section of the Doctrine and Covenants and there you have it in full, a sermon begun in the meridian of time, carried forward during the apostolic age through inspiration, for Paul preached a paragraph of it when he referred to the bodies celestial and the bodies terrestrial, one compared to the glory of the sun and another to the glory of the moon, and then referred to other bodies which are to be compared in glory to the stars, though Paul had not learned the name of that third kingdom or degree of glory; and then the sermon is carried forward in this dispensation, as you will find recorded in the section referred to. Therein the Lord makes plain the fact that salvation as we call it, or being saved, has a relative meaning. That section tells us of the awful state into which shall enter the sons of perdition, those who have sinned against

light and knowledge, those who have been instigators of the shedding of innocent blood. All of this is pointed out, and then the condition of those who attain the very lowest or least of the so-called kingdoms of glory receives attention. The one that Paul had no name for we have learned to be the telestial glory; and we are definitely told just who are the inhabitants or inheritors of the telestial glory. The condition of those who attain the next higher or the terrestrial state is plainly set forth and then the condition of the supremely blessed, those who are permitted to dwell with the Father and with the Son, the Christ, in the celestial worlds throughout eternity.

Now, those who are saved in the telestial glory are saved from the horrors of perdition; those who attain the terrestrial glory are saved from the lower state, in the telestial; and those who attain the celestial are saved from all lesser conditions and the lower glories of the telestial and the terrestrial. Those Jews, including even the twelve apostles, could not comprehend that condition of affairs and therefore the Christ did not answer the question directly but let it go with a very brief and incomplete answer.

I say again this is one of the sermons continued through the ages; and we are able today to comprehend the meaning of salvation in a greater measure than ever before. In this respect be it known the theological world is following the lead of "Mormonism" so-called, not only in this particular but in many others. "Mormonism," that system of revealed truth which constitutes the charter of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is pioneering the way and going before

like a bearer of light; and the thinkers of the world are following it today, although many of them are loath to acknowledge and confess the fact. The doctrine of a single heaven and a single hell, separated by only a narrow strip, and into one or the other of which every soul shall surely go, oftentimes as the result of very close calculation of his account, that horrifying doctrine has been practically abandoned by thinkers generally, by the theologians at the present time, just as they have abandoned the infamous doctrine of the utter condemnation of babes who die unbaptized. It was thought, you know, but a short time ago, that hell was figuratively paved with the skulls of unbaptized babes, that babes who died without baptism were doomed to condemnation that should last forever and forever. And now what find we? That doctrine was taught by an apostate church. It was proclaimed as the result of the absence of light. It was preached as a dogma of men, not a doctrine of Christ. But today we find even the Roman Catholic Church permitting its members to believe that babes who die without baptism enter into a state of rest though they are denied the supreme bliss of beholding the face of God, or as they set it forth, of having the beatific vision of God—a wonderful improvement. I hope that they will come to the whole truth some day, even as the Lord hath declared it by his own word; and so in these respects the revealed word of God is leading and "Mormonism" is pioneering the way for the modern theology.

It was my privilege but a few months ago in addressing a rather distinguished body constituting a philosophical society, comprising

professional men and women, to virtually throw down the challenge in this way in effect, though not in these words: Tell me one instance of advancement in matters theological since 1830 in which the churches have not been following "Mormon" lead. And no instance was produced. I bear my testimony that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is all its name professes to be, all that its name affirms it to be. It is leading the way, it is the gospel of Christ, and we find the sermons of the earlier days carried forward.

"Lord, are there few that be saved?" In the dispensation of the fulness of times the words of the prophet relating to what was shown are thus recorded. "And behold and lo, we saw the glory and the inhabitants of the telestial world, that they were as innumerable as the stars in the firmament of heaven or as the sand on the seashore." Herein lies the significance of the Lord's words to those who asked that question. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able when once the master of the house is risen up and hath shut to the door."

My brethren and sisters, let us lay hold on eternal life before the door is shut. This I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

A solo based upon the 91st Psalm was sung by Irene Cummings.

ELDER STEPHEN L. RICHARDS

President Wilson's message on the Bible to American soldiers—Some of the accomplishments of the Latter-day Saints that will redound to their blessing and insure them life eternal—The splendid work of the

Priesthood and the auxiliary organizations—Security and safety in observing the laws of the gospel and the counsels of the servants of God—Our hope for the people of Zion.

I think, my brethren and sisters, that I have never heard so much scripture quoted to such good purpose as I have heard from our brethren during the sessions of this conference. I hope that their example will be heeded by the Saints and that scripture-reading may become a more prevalent custom than it has been and is today. I note that recently twenty-seven thousand copies of the Bible were, by one Bible society, placed into the hands of American soldiers. In each copy was inscribed a short letter from the President of the United States, and the sentiments expressed in that letter are worthy of our attention. The letter read:

"The Bible is the word of life. I beg that you will read it and find this out for yourselves. Read not little snatches here and there, but long passages that will really be the road to the heart of it. You will not only find it full of real men and women, but also of things you have wondered about and been troubled about all your life, as men have been always, and the more you read the more will become plain to you what things are worth while and what things are not, what things make men happy—loyalty, right-dealing, speaking the truth, readiness to give everything for what they think their duty, and most of all the wish that they may have the real approval of the Christ, who gave everything for them, and what things are guaranteed to make men unhappy—selfishness, cowardice, greed, and everything that is mean and low.

"When you have read the Bible you will know that it is the word of God, because you will have found it the key to your own heart, your own happiness and your own duty.

"WOODROW WILSON."

I believe, my brethren and sisters,