

THIRD DAY.

Conference continued in the Tabernacle, Sunday, April 7, 1918, 10 o'clock a. m., President Joseph F. Smith, presiding.

The great assembly was called to order by President Joseph F. Smith who gave notice of the holding of an overflow meeting in the Assembly Hall, with Elder Joseph W. McMurrin, of the First Council of Seventy, presiding; and an open air meeting near the Bureau of Information, the weather permitting, with Elder Rulon S. Wells, of the First Council of Seventy, presiding. Both these meetings were necessary to accommodate people who could not find room in the overcrowded Tabernacle where every seat and all available standing room was occupied.

The hymn, "Hail to the brightness of Zion's glad morning," was sung by the choir and congregation.

Prayer was offered by President Alonzo A. Hinckley, of the Deseret Stake of Zion.

The choir sang the hymn: "Though in the outward church below."

ELDER ORSON F. WHITNEY.

Why the Gospel is preached—A gathering dispensation—The world's opposition—God will not be thwarted—The parable of the Feast—A compelling situation—Testimonies, then judgments—The Great War—America and her Allies preparing the way for the spread of truth and freedom.

"Is true freedom but to break
Fetters for our own dear sake,
And, with leathern hearts, forget
That we owe mankind a debt?"

No! true freedom is to share
All the chains our brothers wear,
And, with heart and hand, to be
Earnest to make others free!

"They are slaves who fear to speak
For the fallen and the weak;
They are slaves who will not choose
Hatred, scoffing and abuse,
Rather than in silence shrink
From the truth they needs must think;
They are slaves who dare not be
In the right with two or three."

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"Then to side with Truth is noble
when we share her wretched crust,
Ere her cause bring fame and profit,
and 'tis prosperous to be just;
Then it is the brave man chooses,
while the coward stands aside,
Doubting in his abject spirit, till his
Lord is crucified,
And the multitude make virtue of the
faith they had denied."

I have quoted these lines of the poet in order to create an atmosphere for some reflections that have been running through my mind since the beginning of this conference; and perhaps I can best approach my subject proper by relating two little incidents of my personal experience.

Not long ago I stood beside the bier of an aged woman, a Latter-day Saint, speaking at her funeral. One of the brethren then present had read to the congregation a sketch of this good woman's life. She was as old as the Church itself, lacking two months, and was born, if I remember aright, in far away Gloucestershire, England. At nineteen she heard the gospel preached by an elder of the Church, and her

sympathy was at once enlisted. She believed the message that he brought and straightway offered herself for baptism. Her family were much opposed to this step, and it was over the protest of her father and mother, brothers and sisters that she espoused the unpopular cause, the religion of a people hated the world over. So intense was the prejudice that she had to leave home and support herself by the labor of her hands; but she had the courage of her convictions and her faith did not fail. Ten years later she emigrated to America and came on to the Rocky Mountains, but not before her heroic example had had its effect upon those around her. Her parents, brothers and sisters had all followed her into the Church. She had become the savior of her father's house; this little slip of a girl aged only nineteen.

I contrast this with another incident, one that happened many years ago when I was a young missionary in the State of Ohio. In the city of Cleveland I formed the acquaintance of a very estimable lady, the widow of a Union officer who had fallen in battle. She loved her dead husband devotedly; she revered his memory, and was much taken up with the doctrines that I presented to her, particularly those pertaining to salvation for the dead and to eternal marriage, both in person and by proxy, marriage for all eternity. She said, "Do you mean to tell me that if I become a Latter-day Saint I can be sealed to my departed husband and be his wife hereafter?" I replied, "I do mean that very thing, for it is the truth." She exclaimed almost in rapture, "I never heard anything so beautiful; and if you will convince

me that it is indeed true, I will be baptized if it be in a lake of living fire." I answered, "I cannot convince you, I am only a bearer of God's message. But he can convince you as he has convinced me, and I will make you this promise: If you will humble yourself and ask the Lord, he will grant you a testimony that that is a true principle." She said, "I will ask him."

Not long afterward she wrote informing me that God had answered her prayer, and that she was ready to be baptized. I was overjoyed. There is no joy that can compare with that of a missionary who has been made the instrument for the salvation of a soul. I wrote at once that I would make up a little party and meet her at a certain point on the shore of Lake Erie, there to baptize her; and I was about to start for the place appointed when I received another note from her, reading something like this: "I did not dream that I was such a poor, weak, frail creature as I am. I believe what you have told me, I feel that it is true, and I thought myself strong enough to take this step; but I am not. I haven't the stamina, the strength to endure what would follow. Why, if I should become a 'Mormon' I would be hated by the people who now love me, my friends would turn away from me, my name would be cast out as evil; I would lose my social standing. I cannot do it. I hope the day will come when I shall have the necessary strength, but I don't possess it today.

These are some of the experiences that attend the preaching of the gospel in this dispensation—a dispensation destined to gather into its capacious bosom all the dispen-

sations of the past, and which represents the winding up scene of God's great work pertaining to the salvation of man upon this planet. The dominant thought in the mind of the Prophet Joseph Smith during his last days on earth was expressed by him in the following forceful language:

"It is necessary, in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, that a whole and complete and perfect union and welding together of dispensations and keys and powers and glories should take place and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time; and not only this, but those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this the dispensation of the fulness of time." Paul the apostle also referred to this great and final period as one in which God would gather together all things in Christ, both in heaven and upon earth.

Involved in this mighty scheme of bringing together all things that are Christ's, is the gathering of the scattered house of Israel, the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the chosen people, through whom God has worked from the beginning for the salvation and betterment of mankind; and Joseph Smith, a descendant of that Joseph who was sold into Egypt, was the divinely appointed instrument for lifting up the ensign for the gathering of Israel in the last days.

And what is the object in view? Why all this stupendous labor and sacrifice? Why must the house of Israel be assembled? Why must the gospel dispensations—links of a

mighty chain extending from the creation down to the end of time—be bound together in one? It is because God is coming down upon the earth, and the way must be prepared before him. Jesus Christ is coming to reign as King of kings, to inaugurate the millennial era of universal freedom, righteousness and peace; and in order that his coming, which is designed as a blessing, may not prove a curse, a calamity, through the unpreparedness of his people and the world at large, he has set his hand in these days to perform the marvelous work and wonder that the Prophet Isaiah foretold. Israel must be gathered because this God who is coming is the God of Israel, and no other people have the right to receive him. He will come to his own as he came anciently, but his own will not reject him as they did before. Neither will he come again as a lamb led to the slaughter; he will come as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, to sit upon the throne of David and reign for a thousand years, sanctifying the earth and preparing it for future glory, when it will become a heaven, a celestial abode for the righteous. God raised up Joseph Smith and revealed to him anew the everlasting gospel, and conferred upon him the powers of the eternal Priesthood, that he might lift up the ensign as a rallying center for the tribes of Israel, that a people might be ready to receive the Lord when he comes. And for upwards of eighty years this has been the message proclaimed by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

One would suppose, looking at things naturally, that the world would welcome such a message:

that they would rejoice at being told these glad tidings. Think of it! That same Jesus who ascended into heaven two thousand years ago, is coming again to bless the earth with his divine presence! The world ought to be glad of it, and love to be told of it. But it is not so. They do not believe it. They think we are deluded, and that we are trying to deceive them. They regard these things as the vaporings of minds frenzied by fanaticism. But we have a testimony by the Holy Spirit that they are true.

"He that scattered Israel will gather him and keep him as a shepherd doth his flock." This is the message of "Mormonism." But when our elders go forth to proclaim it they meet with all sorts of experiences, all kinds of opposition. The laws of men are in conflict with the laws of God; their traditions and superstitions are opposed to divine revelation. Indifference, prejudice, selfishness, jealousy, passion, pride, wealth, politics, religion, all are in the way of the spread of truth and the accomplishment of God's sublime purpose. A few receive the gospel gladly; some believe it, but are afraid to obey it, because of the sacrifices entailed; while the great mass ignore the saving message, or array themselves against it, sit in judgment upon it, imprison or banish or put to death the messengers, and stand in the way of the progress of God's work, which has as its one object the happiness and salvation of the race.

What is the Lord going to do about it? Will he allow himself to be thwarted? No. He has set his hand to do a certain work, and that work will be done, though all man's

works go to pieces in the process. The Savior, in one of his parables, (Luke 14:15-24) indicates the means that will be used to induce men to receive the gospel and "eat bread" in the kingdom of heaven. "A certain man made a great supper and bade many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come for all things are now ready." I shall modernize the language a little, but this is the substance: One of those invited said, "I cannot come, for I have bought a piece of ground and must needs go and see it;" another excused himself by saying, "I have bought five yoke of oxen and must prove them;" and a third entered this plea, "I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come." The Master of the house was angry at these excuses, and said to his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in hither the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind." This was done, and the poor gladly flocked to the feast: they had no social standing, no wealth, no politics, no material or other interests to hold them back, to keep them from accepting the invitation. They came, but still there was room. The Lord then uttered a very strange command. Said he to his servant, "Go now into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

I know what your thoughts are. You are wondering, Is it possible that God will compel men to be saved? No. Compulsion is the doctrine of Lucifer; it is the doctrine of the German Kaiser, who stands upon the devil's ground, compelling men to do his bidding. The doctrine of Jesus Christ is free-

dom, free agency, the right of choice. He is the God of freedom, his gospel is "the perfect law of liberty;" he is the God of this land, the land of liberty, and the only King who will ever rule over it. You need not fear that any German kaiser will ever set up his throne upon this land. Read the Book of Mormon and be convinced.

But you are wondering what the Lord of the Feast meant when he sent his servant to "compel them to come in." I believe this to be the solution: God will never coerce the human mind—never fetter the human will. He will force no man into heaven; no man into hell. But he has never said that he would not create compelling situations, and so shape human affairs as to induce men and women to do things of their own volition that they would not do if circumstances remained unchanged.

Let me illustrate with another incident of my experience. When I was a little boy I used to study my spelling lesson out of an old blue book, "Webster's Spelling Book." Some of you gray-haired men may have done the same. None of the sisters, of course, will think back that far (Laughter). In that old book were several rude wood cuts, one of them representing a farmer holding an altercation with a bad boy up in an apple tree. The boy was doing wrong—taking the farmer's fruit without permission. In a gentle persuasive voice the owner of the tree asked the thieving urchin to come down, but he only laughed; he was satisfied with things as they were; he wanted to stay there and enjoy himself, and he politely declined the invitation to descend. The farmer then grew

more serious. Putting on a stern manner, he took up some grass or turf and threw it at the boy, sharply demanding that he come down. But a little grass did not hurt him; he only laughed and jeered the more. Then the farmer became terribly in earnest. Picking up some rocks he gave that boy a good pelting, and down he scrambled in a hurry—of his own accord (Laughter). His mind, you see, had remained unfettered; he had his free agency; he could have stayed up there indefinitely had he wanted to; but for some reason he did not want to (Laughter). His mind had changed, and he came down of his own sweet will. That is my idea of a compelling situation.

God is not going to be thwarted. The Creator will not be baffled by the creature. Having set his hand for the gathering of his elect, he will break down every barrier to the spread of truth and the deliverance of the house of Israel. He has sprinkled many nations with the blood of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the blood that believes, and has sent into those nations spirits answering to that blood. As a result, when the gospel goes forth and the children of Israel are commanded to gather, faith is found among all peoples and the progress of God's work is thereby facilitated. Like the rain-showers from heaven over the parched and thirsty soil, this choice blood, having accomplished its object, having made the world—the unbelieving, spiritually barren world—fruitful of good things, is summoned back to the ocean of its origin. This is the significance, the symbolism of the scattering and gathering of Israel.

After testimony will come judg-

ments—stern measures, if the mild ones prove ineffectual. In December, 1832, Joseph Smith prophesied that war would be “poured out upon all nations,” and that famine and other plagues would follow. During the same month God commanded the elders of the Church to go forth and sound the gospel warning. Every man warned was to warn his neighbor, and this was the substance of the divine declaration: “After your testimony cometh the testimony of earthquakes that shall cause groanings in the midst of her;” the voice of tempests, the voice of thunderings and of lightnings, the voice of the waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds. The sun shall be darkened, the moon shall be turned to blood, the stars fall from heaven like figs from off a fig tree. Earth shall reel to and fro like a drunken man; all things shall be in commotion; men’s hearts shall fail them for fear, and they shall fall upon the ground and not be able to stand.

There’s the program—the prophetic program marked out for the consideration of those who stand in the way of Omnipotence, lifting up their puny arms to prevent God’s people from carrying out his command to prepare the way before his glorious coming.

Oh, how thankful I am that our nation, our beloved America, is standing where she ought always to stand, and doubtless always will—standing for freedom and the rights of man, imperiled by the selfish ambition of a bloodthirsty tyrant bent upon dominating the world; that she is standing for those principles of liberty and equality which are a part and portion of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This gospel must make its way into every nook and corner of the world, and woe be to that nation that tries to prevent. I want my boy, who has enlisted in the cause of our country, to feel—not that he is a martyr—I want him to feel that he is a soldier of Jesus Christ, and that upon him devolves in part the duty of spreading a knowledge of these principles, the principles of truth and freedom. The fetters of tyranny were not stricken from America for the sake of Americans alone. God loves the whole world; he gave his Son to save it; he is using America and her allies as instruments for the spread of the Gospel of Liberty, and in their wake, after they have cleared the way, will follow the missionaries of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER DAVID O. MCKAY.

The reality of Christ—Testimony of Peter and Paul and of Joseph Smith—What a change, if all the world would accept the teachings of Christ and his actual divine personality as the Son of God—The Latter-day Saints do so—Testimony of some of our boys who have gone to establish liberty in the world—An example—Individuals and nations must accept the truth that Jesus Christ is in reality the Son of God and be guided by his principles of everlasting truth and justice—The war a preparation for the spreading of the true plan of salvation.

I sincerely hope and pray that I may be able to express whatever the Lord desires me to say this morning. If ever there was a time in my life when I needed his guidance and his support it is at this moment.

I feel it an honor to be associated with men and women who believe in the reality of Christ, our Redeemer.