

SECOND DAY

The forenoon of the second day was devoted to a special priesthood meeting held in the Assembly Hall at 10 o'clock a. m., Monday, April 4, 1921.

AFTERNOON SESSION

President Heber J. Grant called the congregation to order at 2 o'clock. The building was comfortably filled with representatives and Saints from all parts of the Church.

The congregation sang, "Do what is right."

Prayer was offered by Elder James W. Lesueur, President of the Maricopa stake of Zion.

The congregation sang, "How firm a foundation, ye Saints of the Lord."

ELDER JAMES E. TALMAGE

In common with all the general assemblies connected with our great conferences, this meeting is open to the public, to non-members as well as to members of the Church; and we welcome the visitor, the inquirer, the investigator particularly, and those who are called, conventionally, the strangers within our gates. But I take it to be a self-

WHO COMPOSE THIS VAST AUDIENCE.

evident fact that the very large majority of this vast assemblage comprises Latter-day Saints, those who have come in at the door, those who have received the message of salvation gladly and have availed themselves of it, those who have complied with the requirements laid down by him whose Church this is and whose name it bears, as conditions for membership therein.

These are they who have had and have a living faith in God the Eternal Father and in his literal Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer, and in the Holy Ghost, the third Personage in the Godhead.

These are they who have become keenly conscious of the need of repentance, and who have in fact become repentant and have offered unto the Lord that most acceptable of offerings, surpassing all the slain bullocks and rams and other bleeding victims on the altars of Israel, under the law of Moses, namely, a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

These are they who have humbled themselves, submitting them-

selves to the hands of men holding authority of God, commissioned by Jesus Christ, and who have been severally by such a one laid beneath the water, and who have come forth out of the water, as though resurrected from the dead, being thus baptized for the remission of their sins.

These are they who have had hands laid upon them in the authority of the Holy Priesthood, for the bestowal of the right and title to the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

WE REJOICE IN THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

We have good reasons to rejoice. What boon of greater worth could be offered unto man than the forgiveness of his sins, with the innumerable attendant blessings; to be made eligible for pardon, for acceptance by and before the Lord? To such I need not preach the gospel of baptism, for ye have been baptized. I need not dwell upon the requirements respecting faith and repentance, for ye have manifested the one and the other; but I address myself, nevertheless, more particularly to the Latter-day Saints present, and what I shall say to them I am quite sure will hurt none others who may be with us, our welcome visitors who have not yet come into the Church, who have not yet complied with the requirements laid down by the Lord, our Master, as the conditions of citizenship in the kingdom of God.

Yes, we have been baptized for the remission of our sins. To remit, in the sense in which we speak of sins being or having been remitted, is to grant pardon for the offense, and to annul, suspend, or render inoperative the penalty which otherwise would have been inevitable. A question arises in my mind. Are we, you and I, Latter-day Saints, retaining the remission of our sins which we received through obedience to the law of God?

ARE WE RETAINING THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS?

Remission, the pearl of great price, was ours. It is a fit subject for individual inquiry—Is it now yours and mine? Is it ours still?

The righteous Nephite, King Benjamin, toward the close of a forceful address, which he offered on the occasion of his yielding up the authority of kingship unto his son, admonished the people most earnestly to retain the remission of sins which they had received through their baptism, to make it perpetual. And Alma, prophet, high priest, and chief judge, rejoiced when he found that a great part of his people had verily retained the remission of their sins. I refer you to the Book of Mormon, Mosiah, chapter four, verse twenty-six, for the first instance, and to Alma, chapter four, verse fourteen, for the second. Neither you nor I will waste time by reading it again, nor in pondering upon the principle embodied therein—the retention of the blessing of remission of sins.

But perhaps one may ask: Having received a remission, are we not forever entitled to it? Is it possible that God can give and then take back? Let us rather say, it is possible, and all too commonly a reality, for men to receive and then to forfeit. You note that baptism for the remission of sins is the first ordinance specified and the third principle named in our ordinary summary and arrangement of the principles and ordinances of the gospel. It has been beautifully called the gate to the kingdom, whose keeper is the Holy One of Israel. Blessed is he whose sins are forgiven, remitted; but this remission comes as no capricious act, as no favor in the sense of a discriminatory gift, even from God; for he is a just God and he remits sins according to the law of God, which combines both justice and mercy.

The mercy of God is extended unto those who make themselves eligible to receive the gift. God desires to be merciful to us and oft-times we block his way. He desires and yearns to bless us in some particular, and oft-times we make it impossible for him so to do, because we do not comply with the conditions that render us eligible for that exercise of the divine power.

THE LORD CAN GIVE AND RECALL, PRONOUNCE AND CHANGE.

That the Lord can pronounce and change, that he can give and recall, is attested by scripture after scripture. There comes to my mind the parable spoken by the Son of God while He was in the flesh, known to us as the parable of the unmerciful servant, in which we find that though one was forgiven, that forgiveness was revoked, because he forfeited his right to it. He did not retain it, he did not keep it. Not to take time here to read it in full, I commend the parable

AN ILLUSTRATION FROM ANCIENT SCRIPTURE.

to you for perusal. You will find it recorded in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, beginning with the twenty-third verse. It tells the story of a man who was deep in debt. He owed his creditor the enormous sum of ten thousand talents, and being unable to pay he was greatly disturbed when his lord called for payment, and he pleaded for time saying: "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." Now, the lord of that servant was moved with compassion and loosed him and instead of giving him time in which to pay, he forgave him the debt, so merciful was he, so full of kindness and goodness, almost above that of men. But that same servant went out, and, meeting on the way one of his fellow-servants who owed him a paltry hundred pence, seized him by the throat and said: "Pay me what thou owest," and the fellow-servant fell down at his feet and besought him, saying: "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." One would have thought that the very similarity of the plea of the small debtor, in words so like those of the plea he, the greater debtor, had made immediately before, would have moved him to re-

membrance, but he would not, and he cast his fellow-servant into prison, according to the law of that day, whatever we may have to say as to the justice of it. When the other servants saw that they were sorry, and came and reported the matter unto their master. Then the lord of those servants, after that he had called the unmerciful one, said unto him: "O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldst thou also not have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every man his brother their trespasses."

The sin of unforgiveness, hardness of heart, cruelty, herein exemplified, is but a type of sin in general. Let us note the fact that though the lord of that servant had forgiven him his debt, had canceled it in fact, yet when he learned that that servant was no longer humble, that he did not live so as to be worthy of the mercy extended to him, he reversed his act of remission, recalled his forgiveness and demanded of the wicked one payment in full. The blessings of the Lord are always conditional, the condition being our living up to the requirement making us fit recipients of blessing.

The act of baptism does not simply blot out the sins of the past and enable us to begin with a new start, but it provides that if we have submitted to baptism worthily, we are entitled to remission of sin, that is, if we try to do our best, so as to be worthy of that boon.

It is not required nor is it allowed that we shall be baptized over and over again with the thought of wiping out our sins up to date; but it is ordained of God that having been baptized, after manifesting true faith and sincere repentance, if we shall live to be worthy of the remission of sins, through continued repentance, through our unflinching efforts to overcome, through our course of good works, doing unto our neighbors as we would have them do unto us, and in short, through our continued compliance with the commandments of God, we shall have our sins remitted, if they be not so heinous as to be unforgivable.

AN ILLUSTRATION FROM MODERN SCRIPTURE.

The scripture I have cited is ancient; the parable, while truly as applicable today as ever, is nevertheless many centuries old, so far as its record is concerned. In this very day in which we live the Lord has spoken, and that very definitely, concerning this matter. We find recorded in the 56th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants: "Behold, I, the Lord, command, and he that will not obey shall be cut off in mine own due time, and after that I have commanded and the commandment is broken." It is necessary to bear in mind, as the first paragraph indicates, that this revelation is addressed to the people of the Church:

"Hearken, O ye people, who profess my name, saith the Lord your God." Unto them he declares that the Lord does command, and he that will not obey will be cut off in the Lord's own time. Now please note the next verse.

"Wherefore I, the Lord, command and revoke, as it seemeth me good; and all this to be answered upon the heads of the rebellious, saith the Lord."

Only the rebellious, those who will not obey the commandments of God are to be thus dealt with, are to have their blessings revoked; only these will forfeit the blessings to which they were entitled. In another revelation given shortly after that, Section 58, the Lord takes people to task because they were in the habit of saying—and he might well take some of us to task, for we still say it—that the Lord doesn't keep his word, that he makes promises and fails to fulfil them. The Lord makes explanation; let me read a few verses leading up to that particular declaration:

"Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

"For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward.

"But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned.

"Who am I that made man, saith the Lord, that will hold him guiltless that obeys not my commandments?

"Who am I, saith the Lord, that hath promised and hath not fulfilled?

"I command and a man obeys not, I revoke and they receive not the blessing;

"Then they say in their hearts, this is not the work of the Lord, for his promises are not fulfilled. But wo unto such, for their reward lurketh beneath, and not from above."

THE LORD GIVETH AND TAKETH IN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

The Lord is guided by righteousness. In righteousness he giveth and in righteousness he taketh, and blessed be his name.

The sacrament of the Lord's supper has been provided as an ordinance whereby at frequent intervals we can testify unto the Lord that we are still under the covenant that we have made with him by baptism, even witnessing unto God, the Eternal Father, that we do always remember his Son, our Redeemer; that we still bear his name; that we desire and intend to keep the commandments which he has given unto us—and all for this great purpose, that we may always have his Spirit to be with us. Thus we may retain the blessings that we have hitherto received, making them ours throughout time and for eternity. And I cite you to one more scripture which, consisting

THE GREATEST DECLARATION ON THE SUBJECT.

of but few lines only, is perhaps the greatest declaration of its kind on record, and the best summary that I can possibly give unto you in

connection with this thought, as recorded in the 82nd Section of the Doctrine and Covenants, 10th verse:

"I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say, but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise."

Let us keep the commandments of the Lord. Then, by his own word, he is bound to give unto us the blessings that have been promised; but when we do not do what he says, when we go back upon our covenant, we forfeit. May we retain the remission of our sins I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER SEYMOUR B. YOUNG

(Of the First Council of Seventy.)

My beloved brethren and sisters: I have the honor, once more, of standing before you in the General Conference of the Church, in this great building that has witnessed so many gatherings of the Saints. I believe that all persons, making units of this congregation today, have come here with a prayer in their hearts that they may receive blessings, that they may receive new light and intelligence as a guide for their feet and a prompter for their conscience, to lead and direct them in the future, in the way of truth and right.

We have been favored with discourses from our brethren, and I believe that I echo the sentiment of every one, that we have received a blessing from the Lord, and the remarks and the sermons given by our brethren, leaders of the Church, have found a ready place in our hearts, because we are in need of this kind of instruction and in this way proper impressions are made on our lives, from time to time. I rejoice in being a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I remember very well the day I was baptized, when eleven years of age. I missed the opportunity of being baptized sooner, or I didn't have an opportunity, for the reason that, when my father's family emigrated from the city of Nauvoo, just prior to his leaving his home in that city, he took my elder brother and my elder sister down to the Mississippi river and baptized and confirmed them members of the Church. I was only seven years of age and he explained to me that I could not receive baptism and become a member of the Church until another year. But I pleaded with him, and he finally yielded the point and took me into the Mississippi river and baptized me for my health. And that satisfied me for the time. An opportunity for baptism again did not present itself until I was eleven years of age.

I remember very well the day and the person who officiated. Doctor Orin P. Lee, was the one that administered to me that sacred ordinance. Just near by the bank of the creek where the baptism occurred lived my uncle, Phineas H.