

## ELDER JAMES E. TALMAGE

## A CONDITION OF THE COVENANT TO ABRAHAM

On each day of this great conference, and I believe at every session, the name of the great patriarch Abraham has been mentioned, and whenever I have heard it I have thought in part of that for which his name stands—Abraham, the man unto whom the Lord spake when again the world had gone to apostasy, the man with whom he made covenant and established the gospel. There had been apostasies before and a great apostasy was then in progress, when the Lord spake unto him, making covenant with him, definite, sure and blessed; among other things telling him that through him and his posterity all nations of the earth should be blessed. This was one of the conditions of the covenant, that he and his posterity should serve the true and the living God, the God who spoke unto him, Jehovah.

## THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, WORSHIPERS OF JEHOVAH

The world was pagan, heathen and idolatrous, and the Lord would have some few at least whom he could call his own. Therefore did he establish his covenant with Abraham, and later he affirmed it with Isaac and again with Jacob whose children are known by the honored title "the children of Israel." One of the characteristics of that chosen people—for chosen they were and are—was and is that they be worshipers of the living God, not the gods of men, not the idols that men may fashion with their hands, nor the fantastic deities that men may hatch out in their minds as vague conceptions without bodies or parts, without place—but the God of love and the God of fear, the God than whom there is none other in the proper sense and usage of the term.

Consider the situation. All the rest of the world, I repeat, had gone after idols, and Abraham and his posterity came to be distinguished amongst the nations of "Jehovah worshipers." That was one of the characteristics by which the children of Israel were known, even during their Egyptian bondage, though they themselves sometimes forgot it in part, by which they were known throughout the scenes of the exodus, by which they were known after their establishment in the Promised Land, by which they were known even during the time of their great transgressions, for even when the people as a nation had become recreant there were amongst them many who had not forgotten the God of their fathers, and who did not turn aside after Baal or Ashtoreth, nor after the Egyptian Apis, or any of the rest of the mythological deities.

## THE IDOLS THAT MEN WORSHIP

The idols that man makes and which he sets up and worships are the workmanship of his hands or mind. The God of our spirits, verily the Father of our spirits, is no God of man's creation. He creat-

ed us, and calls upon us to worship him and to obey his commandments. Israel was a peculiar people of old, and has remained a peculiar people both in the gathered and in the scattered condition, and that was one of the signs by which they were distinguished from their heathen, pagan, idolatrous contemporaries, and by which they are distinguished from their heathen, pagan, idolatrous contemporaries today. For, mark you, idolatry never was more rife, and paganism was never more widespread than in this very year of our Lord, 1923. Men may now put their golden idols or their images of silver, or brass, or iron, or wood, or stone, always up upon pedestals, and physically kneel down before them and worship them. Gold need not always be cast in the form of a calf after the pattern of Apis to be verily the god of man.

#### ISRAEL A SABBATH-OBSERVING PEOPLE

There were other signs by which these people, who were called after the name of that living God, were distinguished. One of them was that they observed every seventh day as the Sabbath of the Lord. Even the heathen nations had their fast days, but such were instituted by men for the purpose of gratifying the lust of men, and the conceptions of men as to ceremonial and show. The Sabbath of the Lord our God is not a creation of men. Jesus the Christ is Lord of the Sabbath, and Israel amongst the pagan world was characterized as a Sabbath-observing people. Did not the Lord say through Moses, again through Nehemiah, and again through Ezekiel and through others of the prophets—This is a sign between the children of Israel and me? It shall be a sign between me and my children through all generations forever, that they shall observe my Sabbaths.

Pagan sabbaths were holidays, not holy days. Though the two terms come from the same root, there is a vital distinction between them at the present time. The Lord chided the people of old because they had polluted his Sabbaths, and how had they polluted them? Not always by continuing their worldly work, not always because they did not cease their toil, but because they made the Sabbath a day of pleasure and of license and of indulgence that was evil, and forgot to worship the Lord their God specifically on that day of rest. We are not required, nor are we permitted, if we obey the law of God, to be idle. We should be active and in service, but Sabbath-day work should be directly the service of God and not the secular and wage-earning service of man.

#### TITHE-PAYING ANOTHER CHARACTERISTIC OF ISRAEL

There was another prominent distinction, in that those ancient Israelites, even before they came to be a nation, and later as a nation, were peculiar amongst the peoples of the earth by being tithesayers. They were a tithed people. Perhaps some scholars may say that even the Egyptians practiced the law of tithing. Yes, in a certain way

they did, and other pagan nations have done the same, but to all such tithing was a law that they had established amongst themselves, and that they put into operation through compulsion. They did not practice the law of tithing because it was required of them by the Lord, but they themselves evolved the idea. They found it a convenient method of taxation. It was not holy, it was not sacred unto them, but in early days the Lord made it plain that His people, to be acceptable unto Him, must be tithed, and everything they had was to be tithed.

#### THE LAW OF SACRIFICE CONTRASTED

Now, the law, very often called the Mosaic law, was in course of time superseded by the gospel, the gospel restored through the ministry of Christ—it had been upon the earth before. The gospel had been given to Adam with the ordinances essential to salvation. It had been given to Noah, it had been given to Abraham, but it was brought again by the Christ after a long period of partial apostasy, during which period the chosen people were living under the lesser law, but that lesser law, the law of Moses as it is called, was not destroyed by the coming of Christ. He said he came not to destroy it, but to fulfil it, and it was fulfilled, indeed superseded by the gospel. The gospel included and includes everything in the law of Moses that is required for the salvation of men. But the outward ordinances and training exercises peculiar to the law of Moses were largely done away with, for the schoolmaster had been in a manner efficient, and had brought his wilful, recreant, oft-times stubborn pupils to a partial understanding of the higher law. Many of us think that with the passing of the law of Moses, the requirements of sacrifice passed. Nay, nay, the law of sacrifice is in operation today; but it is not accompanied by the outward form and manner of offerings that were characteristic of that ordinance in the day of Moses and during the Mosaic dispensation.

#### THE PRESENT A DAY OF GATHERING

The present is the day of gathering, when Israel are being assembled from even the outermost parts of the earth, when the Lord has reached out his hand again to gather his people. This work is in progress at such a rate that soon shall the ancient prophecy and promise be realized, as voiced by Jeremiah: "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;

"But, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers."

#### THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST RESTORED IN THIS DAY

In this day of gathering the Lord has restored the gospel of

Jesus Christ, and he has done it in the way predicted, *the way*, his way, and therefore the best way to make it most impressive. He requires of Israel today those same signs and symbols of their professions, of their confessions, that were required of them of old. His people today, if they are his people indeed, must be worshipers of the true and the living God; not worshipers of some conception of an immaterial being, a nondescript nothing that fills all space and can nowhere be found, but a living God, after whose physical, mental and spiritual likeness man has been created. God the Father is such a being, as has been made known to us by revelation of his very person; and Jesus Christ is such a being. Both Jesus Christ and the Father have been seen and heard in this day and age.

#### THE CHOSEN PEOPLE OF GOD MUST OBSERVE HIS SABBATHS

If we be the people of Israel, the chosen people of God, as is our high profession, we must be thus characterized. Then, whatever shall be the fancies and fantasies of the world, let us be true to the living God, the God who with his Son Jesus Christ, was manifested to the youthful seeker after truth, afterward the Prophet Joseph Smith. We accept the God of our fathers in all literalness. We find that we can come much nearer unto him by that acceptance. We, the chosen of God, must show forth those distinguishing works specified by him. Are we observing his Sabbaths? Where do we stand, oh Israel? Is the reproach to come upon us? Are we polluting that holy day by pandering to our own lust after pleasure, after our own laziness, or perchance, giving ourselves up to the pursuit of wealth on that day? It is the Lord's day, not ours. He has given us six, but the seventh is his, and he demands that we shall recognize it as his and devote every hour of that day to his service. How do we stand, where is that sign showing forth in our lives and in our work as individuals and as families? Is there a sign over your door, oh Latter-day Saints, showing that you are strict observers of the Sabbath, or have you been swept away by this tide of apostasy that is ever seeking to engulf?

#### TITHING A SIGN OF THE GREAT BROTHERHOOD OF GOD

Are we showing forth this other sign of the great brotherhood of God, the sanctifying of our means by setting aside the Lord's tenth as sacred, and as holy? We have no right to use it, it is not ours, it is the Lord's. Let us be true to our colors, to our covenants, to our station as representatives of the living God, his children, his covenant children, I pray, in the Lord's name. Amen.

Brother Jacob Nichols sang a solo entitled, "My King."