

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

PRESIDENT RUDGER CLAWSON

I am dependent this afternoon upon the Lord and the faith of the congregation for what I shall say. We had a very excellent meeting this morning. I trust that the Lord by his spirit will continue to be with us.

A CONUNDRUM

I have in my hands an article entitled "Happiness," written by Bruno Lessing. I will read a few lines of said article.

"Many a philosopher has propounded the conundrum, What is the object of life? Why have we been placed upon this planet, to struggle along for a few years and then to die? Has a beneficent Providence some scheme which we cannot fathom? This conundrum has not yet been answered."

THE ANSWER

In reply to these words I may say that the conundrum here spoken of has been answered, and that a beneficent Providence has some scheme which we are able to fathom in order to arrive at a satisfactory solution of this great and important question. "What is the object of life?" We must necessarily hark back to the pre-existent state of our spirits. I know that this will seem to be a strange doctrine to many—the pre-existence of our spirits—but the scriptures are replete with references to this important subject. We are living here now. We lived before we came here. Let me submit a scripture or two bearing upon this subject:

Hebrews 12:9: "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"

Numbers 16:22: "And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?"

Ecclesiastes 12:7: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

WE WERE THE CHILDREN OF GOD IN THE SPIRIT WORLD

Now, brethren and sisters and friends, as a matter of fact, and as these scriptures which I have read, and many other scriptures, indicate, we existed before we came here and belonged to a great family of spirits in heaven. We speak of our Father in heaven. Jesus said, When you pray, say, "Our Father which art in heaven." We were his children in spirit, in heaven, and suffice it to say we also have a mother in heaven. There were parents in heaven—parents and children.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

Let me say to you that when the earth was organized and rolled into existence, the Lord had a great and glorious purpose in view, and it was that these sons and daughters in the spirit world should come down to the earth and inhabit it. Now the first great creative act in the beginning of the world indicates the importance of this subject. We read in Genesis 2: 7:

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

MAN'S CREATION

What a wonderful, marvelous statement this is. Think, my brethren and sisters, what it signifies! We learn from this passage that man could only develop into a perfect soul by taking a body. Perhaps that passage might be better understood if it were rendered in a little different way but with the same meaning—The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils his spirit, and man became a living soul. It is the spirit which is the breath of life. And so man never did develop, and never could have developed into a perfect soul without the body. And thus we begin to get an insight into the purpose of life. The Lord said in one of the revelations to Joseph Smith, the Prophet, section 88:

"And the spirit and the body are the soul of man. And the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul."

REDEMPTION THROUGH THE GOSPEL AND THE RESURRECTION

So that we get the impression from these scriptures that when man comes into the world, as we have done, he begins almost from the first to look forward to the redemption of his soul through the resurrection. And how may this redemption be accomplished? The answer has a bearing directly upon the object and purpose of life. Surely no man can be redeemed except he will obey the commandments of God. I take it that redemption means that we are redeemed from sickness, disease, trouble, sorrow and sin; and that can only be brought about through obedience, as I said, to the commandments of God. These commandments of the Almighty are set forth in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and if men reject the gospel how can they hope to come into the Church and kingdom of God, and be saved and redeemed?

You will remember doubtless the conversation between Nicodemus and the Savior, when Nicodemus came to him privately by night, in order possibly to get further light and information. He confessed that he knew the Savior was a prophet because of the great works he had done. The Savior made what might seem to be a peculiar answer. He said: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." That was very confusing to Nicodemus. He could not

comprehend such a statement. He wondered how it might be. Could a man return to the spirit world and then be born again? In answer the Savior said, amplifying his first statement: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Now, brethren and sisters, a rejection of the gospel is a bar, an absolute bar, against any man or woman entering into the kingdom of God.

The importance of the body, and we have been emphasizing that thought very considerably, is greatly emphasized by another revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, section 93:

THE PURPOSE OF MAN'S LIFE

"For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy;

"And when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy.

"The elements are the tabernacle of God; yea, man is the tabernacle of God, even temples; and whatsoever temple is defiled, God shall destroy that temple."

Now you see how directly this passage refers to the object of life, the very purpose of life. In securing a body, we are at once put upon the line of progress that leads to exaltation and glory. We could not do this in our spirit state, but the opportunity is before us here, because the Lord tells us that the body of man is composed of element, that spirit and element inseparably connected receiveth a fulness of joy, or a fulness of happiness. Happiness is the very thing that this writer is dealing with, and that is how it is to be obtained.

THE WONDERFUL BEAUTY OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

How beautiful, how wonderful, is the gospel of Jesus Christ! What marvelous light is thrown upon our lives in mortality through the scriptures that we have. The question might be asked: How is it that philosophers and wise men, many of them, reject this light, reject the principles of the gospel? The answer is: Because they are not spiritually minded. These things can only be comprehended and fully understood by the Spirit of God, and not otherwise. And so vital is this question, so important to our welfare and happiness, that the Savior delivered this tremendous charge to his apostles after the crucifixion; he said to them: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," or condemned, which means the same. So that those who turn away from the light and who reject the gospel, be they the learned or the unlearned, men or women, they are under condemnation, and, of course, will not attain to a fulness of happiness, to complete and perfect joy. Their wings, so to speak, will be clipped and they will come short. Now is it any

wonder, my brethren and sisters, that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in which is to be found the gospel in its fulness, should send it message to the ends of the earth by our elders?

OUR DUTY TO CARRY THE GOSPEL MESSAGE TO THE WORLD

It seems to me that it is our bounden duty, that the responsibility which was placed upon the apostles in early days rests now also upon the apostles of latter days and also upon the elders of Israel, to carry this message to the world; and as we have received the light freely, we are to give it to others freely. We cannot escape the responsibility.

Standing before you this afternoon, I solemnly testify that this work in which we are engaged is the Church and kingdom of God, that Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph Smith was and is his Prophet, and the instrument in the hands of God in founding his Church upon the earth in these latter days. This is my testimony, and I rejoice in it. I glorify the Lord, and I am striving, and I hope to be able, to live the religion which has come to me, which is so perfect in all of its principles, and in the organization of the Church. Brethren and sisters, the Lord in heaven bless you and sustain you and strengthen you for your duties, and guide you continually, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

ELDER MELVIN J. BALLARD

I desire to read a portion of the 86th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the same being a communication from the Lord Jesus Christ to the Prophet Joseph Smith,—and the address is made to all the Saints and elders of the Church.

PROMISES TO BE FULFILLED IN OUR DAY

The Lord admonishes the Latter-day Saints to have faith and confidence in the former promises made by the prophets of old, and gives us an assurance that we are living in a day when these great and precious promises are to be fulfilled; and the language which I now quote is as follows:

“Therefore, thus saith the Lord unto you, with whom the priesthood hath continued through the lineage of your fathers—

“For ye are lawful heirs, according to the flesh, and have been hid from the world with Christ in God—

“Therefore your life and the Priesthood have remained, and must needs remain through you and your lineage until the restoration of all things spoken by the mouths of all the holy prophets since the world began.

“Therefore, blessed are ye if ye continue in my goodness, a light unto the Gentiles, and through this Priesthood, a savior unto my people Israel. The Lord hath said it.”

How great and wonderful is this promise, that through this