

ELDER RULON S. WELLS

Of the First Council of the Seventy

I earnestly pray that I may be guided and directed by the Spirit of the Lord during the few moments that I occupy here this morning.

I am deeply impressed with the great drama that is being enacted upon this world's stage. Shakespeare tells us that "all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." It is a wonderful thing that is taking place before our very eyes. This drama is one of great importance to every man, woman and child.

There was a prologue to this drama, enacted in heaven before the foundations of this earth were laid. In this prologue the purpose of the Almighty with reference to his sons and daughters who had been begotten of him in the spirit before the world was made, was vividly portrayed—unfolding the divine plan of life and salvation—greatly to the delight of his children, especially those great and noble ones of that primeval day, the morning stars, for their hearts were filled with joy and gladness and they sang together in a mighty chorus and shouted for joy. Let me refer to scriptures which have a significant bearing on this thrilling episode of human history. That we were begotten of God in the spirit and that just such a prologue was enacted is clearly indicated in the following simple narratives in holy writ:

And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. (Gen. 4:1.)

From this we may readily conclude that all children born to earthly parents are gotten from the Lord and that earthly fathers and mothers are the divinely appointed guardians of God's children, for he is the Father of our spirits and is appropriately addressed when we approach him in prayer as "Our Father in heaven."

Again:

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? (Heb. 12:9.)

And again:

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. * * *

When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:4, 7.)

A fuller and more complete presentation of this prologue is set forth in the Book of Abraham: 3:22-28:

Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;

And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.

And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell.

And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.

And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And he Lord said: I will send the first.

And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him.

No wonder that there was rejoicing in heaven among the children of God upon hearing this marvelous proclamation. Those who kept their first estate were to be added upon. In other words, there was to be added to their immortal spirits these bodies of flesh and bones. All who now live upon this earth or ever have lived or shall live upon it are they who kept their first estate in the spirit world before the foundations of the earth were laid and are now to be given the opportunity of proving their fitness for celestial glory. To this end they are given the span of human life—a period of probation—to “prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.” All things whatsoever the Lord shall command are embodied in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and now if they keep their second estate or in other words, obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ in this probationary period, “they shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.”

This is the covenant—the everlasting covenant which God made with his children in that primeval day while they were yet in the spirit and concerning which we read so much in the scriptures. With these glorious promises and the holy covenant by which God binds himself to us if we enter into it with him and keep the same inviolate, or in other words, keep our second estate, the curtain falls and the prologue is ended and the recollection of it is withheld.

For a wise and glorious purpose,
Thou hast placed me here on earth;
And withheld the recollection
Of my former friends and birth.

The first act of this great drama was performed in the Garden of Eden. Among the features of that act, our eyes were to be opened. The recollection of our previous existence was withheld from us. We

were to be agents unto ourselves, and the peculiar part that each one of us had to play should be selected by ourselves. We had our free agency to act whatever part we would in the unfolding of this great drama. But before this could take place our eyes had to be opened; we had to receive the light, even the light of Christ, that enabled us to know good from evil, as we read in the Book of Mormon, in Chapter 7 of the Book of Moroni and in the 16th paragraph, where it says:

For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil.

That having been given to us, we were under obligation to walk in the light. Simultaneously with that experience came also the opposition which needs to be set up in order that we might be tried. How could we be tried unless there was opposition? So Satan came also with his vile temptations, endeavoring to lead men and women away from God. Therein lies the whole purpose of human life and experience as it has to do with our lives, and every one of us must act our own part upon this stage.

There are many acts that have been provided. Each one may be designated as a dispensation of God's providence among the children of men. They have been accompanied by an outpouring, a dispensation of God's goodness to his children in the effort to bring us back to him. The great hero, the great leader, the great captain of all these various dispensations is and always has been the first born of all the children of God, and the only-begotten of the Father in the flesh, namely, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In the meridian of time in which his great act of atonement for the sins of the world was enacted he dwelt amongst mankind in mortal body as the son of Mary—the very Son of the living God.

He has raised up mighty prophets to usher in these various dispensations. They have each one had their important part to play, and the world has been benefited by them. They have left behind them a record of their doings, of the principles that they have taught, of the truths that have been revealed from heaven through the instrumentality of the prophets of God and the instrumentality of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

How grateful, then, we ought to be that the Lord has not left us in darkness. He has enlightened our minds through the Spirit of Christ. He has given us our free agency, and whether or not we shall play our part well depends entirely upon us as individuals, and no one can escape from performing his own part.

So we are all on the stage, and will be required to answer the call when the cue is given, and we must perform our part according to the light that we have, if we would obtain the benefits that God has promised if we do all things whatsoever he hath commanded us.

The trouble with mankind, the greatest difficulty to be overcome is,

I think, indifference on the part of mankind to learn what is the will of God, what is the underlying purpose of this great drama. It is a wonderful drama. It is full of dramatic incident. It is full of romance. There is much of comedy, but it is also a great tragedy in which the whole world is involved.

We have been favored in being permitted to live in the closing act of that great drama, ushered in by that great latter-day prophet, Joseph Smith. It is the final act upon this earth, warning mankind of the promises made of old to the prophets that have been before, the promises that have been made to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the promises that have been made through all the ages, the different dispensations of God's providence to us. The climax of this last act will be the second advent of our Lord when he comes to reign upon the earth for a thousand years—when he shall appear in the clouds of glory ushering in the great millennial reign of peace.

Are we acting our parts well? The Lord is proving us, and to what end? That we might inherit eternal life, for we are living in this last dispensation, and shortly the curtain will fall and what then? What shall become of us? Where shall we be? Some will be exalted into the celestial kingdom of God. Some will be in the terrestrial kingdom; others in the telestial kingdom. A few, I hope very few, shall fail utterly and be numbered among the sons of perdition.

Our ambition is that we may do all things whatsoever the Lord our God shall call upon us to do, and if we do we shall inherit eternal life in the presence of God. Celestial glory shall be added unto us forever and forever. And then our "Confidence shall wax strong in the presence of God, and the doctrine of the priesthood [which is the power of God] shall distil upon our souls as the dews from heaven." The Holy Ghost shall be our constant companion, and our scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth, and our dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto us forever and ever.

These are the promises of the Almighty, but they require us to do our part. In the first act of this great drama our eyes were opened. We received the knowledge of good and evil. Have we chosen the good and rejected the evil? Have we loved darkness more than light? We have had the opportunity to choose—every man. Blessed are we if we have chosen the better part. One distinguishing feature of this drama is that every man can act in it according to his own will. He can make of himself a hero or a villain of the deepest die. He can make of himself a valiant servant of the Lord, a worthy child of God. No matter what positions or roles he may be called upon to enact, even the least of us can attain to the highest degree if he acts his part well.

Then ought we not to appreciate the great value of this Gospel, and the great value of the revelations, the dispensations of God's providence to us, wherein the truth has been made known to us? But

alas! the indifference of mankind toward the truth—they don't seek to know what that truth is. The Lord wants us to know the truth. He said: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me," and of course of his work.

Oh, how we ought to love the truth and seek to know it. It should be the ambition of every man. We sing about it:

O say what is truth, 'tis the brightest prize
To which mortals or gods can aspire;
Go search in the depths where it glittering lies,
Or ascend in pursuit to the loftiest skies;
'Tis an aim for the noblest desire.

Let us desire the truth, then.

Dr. John A. Widtsoe, in his little choice book, "In Search of Truth," makes this comment:

Every man may find the way to truth, if he only desires it, but he must desire it with all his might, mind and strength.

Let us then seek to know the truth, and it will make us free. Let us search the scriptures, the volume of God's dealings with mankind; his revelations to this generation, found in this precious little book here, known as the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. The preface to that book, which wasn't the first of the revelations, by any means, now occupies the place as the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants. In conclusion let me quote the closing paragraphs of that wonderful preface to this book of revelations:

Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled.

What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.

For behold, and lo, the Lord is God, and the Spirit beareth record, and the record is true, and the truth abideth forever and ever. Amen.

ELDER JAMES H. DOUGLAS

Former President of the British Mission

How shall I sing thy beauty, pow'r and light,
O glorious kingdom of the latter days!
I see thy loveliness, I feel thy might,
But fail in utterance to speak thy praise!

I search in vain the records of the past,
Which paint dead kingdoms in their short-lived pride,
They cannot picture thee, whose pow'r shall last
While heav'n and truth and Deity abide.