

There are present on the stand this morning President Grant and his two Counselors, the eleven Apostles, all of the First Seven Presidents of Seventies, and all of the Presiding Bishopic.

The music today will be furnished by the Blackfoot Stake Choir, Elder Ronald Bitton, Director, Elder Frank W. Asper, Organist.

The congregation and the Blackfoot Stake Choir sang the hymn, "Do What is Right."

Elder Wilford W. Warnick, President of the Timpanogos Stake, offered the opening prayer.

The Choir sang "Lift Up Your Heads"—Taylor.

ELDER JOSEPH F. MERRILL

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Revelation is the rock upon which the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is built. It is the basis of Mormonism—the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ in its fulness. Using the term revelation in a broad sense, it is the means the Lord has always employed to acquaint His children with the plan of salvation, with a knowledge of His existence and of our relationship to Him. We believe the Bible and other scriptures are divinely inspired writings.

JOSEPH SMITH, HEAVEN-TAUGHT

The Prophet Joseph Smith was wonderfully favored by the Lord in the matter of revelation. So far as the records show, it began in what was the most marvelous vision ever given to mortal man. The Father and the Son not only showed themselves to Joseph but actually talked to him. In addition to these personages a number of others of the greatest personages in heaven also appeared and talked to him—Moses, Elias, Elijah, John the Baptist, the Apostles Peter, James and John, and the prophet Moroni—an imposing list of immortals. Thus to a remarkable degree Joseph Smith was heaven-taught by word of mouth as well as by inspiration of the Holy Ghost. We are entirely correct, therefore, when we say that divine revelation is basic to the organization and continued existence of this Church.

REVELATION—FOR THE CHURCH AND FOR INDIVIDUALS

Without revelations other than the inspired teachings of the Bible this Church could never have been organized. There would have been no need for it, because it could not have been essentially different from existing churches. It would have had no more light than they have—no fuller truth to impart.

Revelation is needed not only to guide the organization and teachings of the Church, but also to enable the members to function acceptably in their respective duties. One thing that is characteristic of the Latter-day Saints is their assurance that God lives, that this is His accepted Church and that He helps His children according to their worthiness and

needs. Experience has taught them the validity of certain scriptural teachings relative to the individual receiving divine revelations.

We remember what Jesus said to Peter when He asked His disciples "Whom say ye that I am?" The answer came quickly from Peter,

Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in heaven. (Matt. 16:15-17.)

This indicates that Peter received his knowledge through divine revelation.

THE PRAYER OF FAITH ANSWERED

Joseph Smith's boyhood experience in this matter has been published world-wide. The lad most earnestly wanted to know which church to join. He decided to ask the Lord, for he read in the writings of the Apostle James the following:

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

However, James gave a caution in these words:

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. (James 1:5-7.)

This biblical passage heartened the boy and he went into the nearby woods to pray. The sequel was the most marvelous vision ever given to mortal man. The Father and the Son appeared to Joseph in a column of transcendent light. He not only saw them, he heard their voices, for they spoke to him. He learned the truth that God hears and answers prayers.

Many Latter-day Saints can and do bear witness to the truth of another saying of Jesus recorded by the Apostle John and stated in these words:

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. (John 7:17.)

This of course indicates that revelation is the means of getting this knowledge.

I give another scriptural reference on this point. It is clearly and explicitly written and is found in the Book of Mormon, recorded in the tenth chapter of Moroni and is as follows:

And when ye shall receive these things, [those written in the Book of Mormon] I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things. (Moroni 10:4-5.)

REVELATION FROM TWO SOURCES

I call attention to this principle of revelation, not that all Latter-day Saints do not accept it, but to point out that there are certain dangers regarding it about which a few of our people seemingly need to be warned. The kind of revelation of which I have spoken is divine revelation. I know of no dangers associated with this kind of revelation. Its source is heaven and most commonly is a manifestation of the power of the Holy Ghost. But using the term in its broadest sense it will include the whisperings that come from evil sources through the power of Satan.

According to our teachings, Satan and an army of supporters were cast down to earth from the premortal spirit world. They are spirit brothers of ours, and are real persons having spirit bodies. As surely as we live they live also. They are trying to handicap and thwart the work of the Lord. Wherever the Saints are found there the devil is also. If Satan can overcome the Saints, he will have all the world subject to him. He is a deceiver, the father of lies, the source of evil, the enemy of all righteousness.

He has great power in the earth. He has deceived, and is deceiving, some people who have been and may now be members of the Church, but members in grave danger. One of his schemes is to give them a type of revelation, inducing them to believe that these come from heaven instead of from the devil. It is these people that are in urgent need of a warning.

In writing to the Corinthians the Apostle Paul speaks of those opposing his labors as:

.... false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (II Cor. 11:13-15.)

Do you notice the similarity in method used in Paul's day and in this day by emissaries of Satan?

In Matthew, Chapter 24, Jesus in speaking of the signs and conditions preceding His second coming is reported as saying:

There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. (Matt. 24:24.)

FALSE PROPHETS TODAY

Do you know of any false prophets among us in these days—those misguided, lying, deceitful workers who claim to be the recipients of divine revelation? In the 7th Chapter of Matthew Jesus is again reported as saying:

By their fruits ye shall know them. Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonder-

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ful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Matt. 7:20-23.)

There are many scriptural references, particularly in the Doctrine and Covenants, that might be given of the deceiving power of Satan. One found in the Book of Mormon bears directly upon the point I have in mind. It is found in the 30th Chapter of Alma. Korihor, an anti-Christ, was arrested and brought before Alma, the governor and chief judge, for teaching infidelity and leading the people into wickedness. Before the judge Korihor refused to desist from his position and demanded from Alma a sign that there is a God. When struck dumb Korihor wrote:

The devil hath deceived me; for he appeared unto me in the form of an angel, and said unto me: Go and reclaim this people, for they have all gone astray after an unknown God. . . . And he taught me that which I should say, and I have taught his words. . . . (Alma 30:53.)

Are all of us not acquainted with instances essentially like the one Alma relates of Korihor?

THE DECEIVED

Occasionally there comes to my office and presumably to other offices in the building, an individual who claims he has a divine message for the Church or for President Grant. Of course, we give no credence to their claims. But I refer to their claims in illustration of the statement that our belief in modern revelation may be the means of leading away some of the people unless they are on their guard. Perhaps at no time in history did Satan have power as great as he has today. There was no time in the past when so many people believed in revelation as today. Satan tempts us where we are most vulnerable. He misleads a few into believing that the promptings that come from him are divine revelations. These false prophets in turn are seemingly so devout, so humble, so earnest and sincere that they, with Satan's help, are able to deceive and mislead many others—only those, however, who profess a belief in modern revelation. Thus heresies spring up, faith in our leaders is destroyed and the devil laughs because of his successes. The foolish who have been blinded have been led to believe that they are serving the cause of the Master when the fact is they are dupes of the devil. I speak plainly to avoid being misunderstood.

There are adulterous men going about lying to and trying to deceive people into believing that the President and leaders of the Church have lost the spirit of their callings and have repudiated some Gospel principles. This is one of the ways in which the devil is working.

INDIVIDUAL GUIDANCE

We believe that an individual is entitled to divine guidance in his personal and material affairs. President Joseph F. Smith was reported in a Conference sermon as saying the following:

Every man has the privilege to exercise these gifts (of revelation) in the conduct of his own affairs . . . in the management of his farm, his flocks, his herds and in the management of his business.

I was once reliably told that President Wilford Woodruff advised going ahead with building the Lehi sugar factory, even though a committee of business men had reported and decided against its feasibility. President Woodruff knew the project would be successful because the Lord had so indicated. But Satan has deceived many Church members by his devilish manifestations in matters of material projects. I called attention to one of those in a recent stake conference. No loyal Church member can logically expect a project to prosper when it has been disapproved by two presidents of the Church.

THE WORTHY MAY DETECT EVIL

Yes, the devil is among the Saints. Let them beware. He uses various means and methods—those that are found to be most effective, depending on many pertinent factors. He catches often those who are off their guard. None of us is secure from his wiles. To be as secure as may be we must have the help of the Lord. This is available if we worthily seek it. Every one in the Church must have it if he does well the work authoritatively assigned him to do. But no officer, no missionary can fully enjoy the work of his calling in the Church without the spirit thereof, which is given through the Holy Ghost.

Brethren and sisters, let us not be deceived. There are many agents of Satan abroad in the land and some of them may be self-deceived, not knowing that they are in the power of the evil one. However, the spirit of the devil among this people may be detected by all honest, sincere members who keep the commandments of the Lord. The spirit of the Lord is comforting, joy-producing, love-inspiring, help-giving. The spirit of the devil is manifested in fault-finding, envy, selfishness, hatred, deceit, dishonesty, and produces misery, sin and crime.

GUIDANCE THROUGH PRAYER

Do the people of the Church want a safe guide to what is well for them to do? It is this: Keep in harmony with the Presidency of this Church. Accept and follow the teachings and advice of the President. At every Conference we raise our hands to sustain the President as prophet, seer and revelator. Is it consistent to do this and then go contrary to his advice? Is anyone so simple as to believe he is serving the Lord when he opposes the President? Of course, the President is not infallible. He makes no claims to infallibility. But when in his official capacity he teaches and advises the members of the Church relative to their duties, let no man who wants to please the Lord say aught against the counsels of the President.

In the spirit of helpfulness let me give you a key. When in doubt go on your knees in humility with an open mind and a pure heart with a real desire to do the Lord's will, and pray earnestly and sincerely for divine guidance. Persist in praying in this way until you get an answer that fills your bosom with joy and satisfaction. It will be God's answer. If obedient to this answer you will always act as the President indicates. You will then be safe. God help us all to act wisely I pray in Christ's name.