

PRESIDENT GEORGE ALBERT SMITH

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My dear brothers and sisters, all children of our Heavenly Father: Wherever you may be, I greet you and address you with a prayerful desire that what I say may be a source of comfort and prove to be a blessing.

GOD'S PLAN IN THE CREATION

The Holy Bible contains the advice of our Heavenly Father, and I accept without mental reservation the statements made in Genesis, chapters 1 and 2, that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth and every living thing that has inhabited the earth, including man:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it. (Genesis 1:27, 28.)

These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. (Genesis 2:4, 5.)

This was all a spiritual creation. Then follows the physical creation.

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. (Genesis 2:7.)

It was in the plan of our Heavenly Father that every living thing that he created should each reproduce after its kind. Adam and Eve were the children of God; they were our first parents, and every human being that has lived upon the earth descended from them. God gave them their agency to decide for themselves in all matters and held them responsible for their conduct. They received their instructions in the Garden of Eden from our Heavenly Father and those teachings were preserved for succeeding generations.

Biblical chronology indicates that nearly six thousand years ago our first parents began their earth life. The Lord instructed them how they should conduct themselves, and his prophets divinely commissioned to speak for him, have taught Adam's descendants through the ages how to live to be happy in mortality and so qualify that when the time comes for them to die, they may pass into immortality taking with them the riches of their characters and the knowledge they have gained here. Those who conform their lives most nearly to the teachings of our Heavenly Father will receive the greatest reward and enjoy the most happiness here and hereafter.

THE VALUE OF THE BIBLE

Among other things, the prophets were required to keep a record of the truth that was revealed to them from time to time that it might be passed on for the benefit of their posterity, each generation inheriting from its forebears. Today, therefore, we of this generation are in possession of a record that has been preserved for our guidance containing information that the Lord has revealed from the beginning. I refer to the Holy Bible. Not only does it declare that which has occurred in the past, but it tells of events that were to occur in the future, in some cases generations before they actually did occur. It also informs us that fulfillment occurred at the time that had been specified.

The Prophet Amos said:

Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. (Amos 3:7.)

THE WARNING OF THE PROPHETS

I know of nothing of great importance that has happened in the world that the Lord through his prophets has not advised the people of beforehand, so that they have not been left in ignorance of what was to develop, but could plan their lives, if they would, to their advantage. I cite the following incidents in support of this:

The case of Noah is in point. He was commanded of the Lord to build an ark in which the righteous might be preserved from the flood which was to come. Noah built the ark and preached repentance to his generation for a period of one hundred and twenty years, thus fully warning them. The people, however, were so wicked that they failed to heed the warning. Having their agency, they chose evil rather than righteousness. The rains descended, and the floods came, and only Noah and his family of eight souls were saved. All had been fully warned, but because of their wilfulness and their refusal to repent they were drowned.

Another instance is that of Abraham and his posterity. He was informed that his seed would go into a strange land and after serving there for a period of four hundred years, would come out with great substance, all of which was thereafter literally fulfilled when Moses, being a descendant of Abraham, led the children of Israel out of Egypt back to the promised land.

Joseph, a faithful son of Jacob, who had been sold into slavery by his brothers, was in a prison in Egypt when Pharaoh had a dream that troubled him, that his wise men could not interpret. Pharaoh was told that Joseph could interpret the dream, and he was brought before the king. He informed Pharaoh that he could not interpret the dream but that God would give Pharaoh the answer. Joseph, having received the interpretation from the Lord, told Pharaoh that his dream was of great importance, that there were to be seven years of plenty throughout the land, followed by seven years of famine, and if Pharaoh during the years of plenty would accumulate food, when the

famine came his people would not starve. Pharaoh accepted Joseph's interpretation and advice, then rewarded him by making him overseer of Egypt, only the king being greater than he. At the end of fourteen years the dream as interpreted by Joseph had been literally fulfilled, the Egyptians having been saved from starvation.

Another prophetic incident was the attempt to rebuild Jericho. When the city of Jericho was overthrown, a curse was placed upon it, and the people were warned that any man who should rebuild it would lose his first-born and his youngest son. The city lay waste until hundreds of years had passed, when Hiel, a Bethelite, who lived in the days of Ahab, ventured to rebuild the city, but no sooner had he laid its foundation than Abiram, his first born son, died. Still persevering in his determination to complete his work, he set up the gates, and Segub, his youngest son, passed away, thus fulfilling the prophecy.

Then there is the instance where Jeremiah prophesied that Jerusalem would be overthrown and her people remain in bondage for seventy years. This was to be accomplished by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. In due time Jerusalem with its beautiful temple was burned. Her princes, nobles, artisans, and many of her people were carried as prisoners to Babylon along with the sacred vessels from the temple.

One hundred and forty years before Cyrus the Great was born, the prophet Isaiah predicted his birth and announced his name and said that he should overthrow Babylon; also that he would rebuild Jerusalem, notwithstanding the fact that he was alien to all the interests of the Jews.

When Cyrus was about fifty years of age, after subduing many peoples and small nations, he appeared with his army before Babylon, the then greatest of all cities, with its impregnable walls, three hundred feet high, and its mighty gates of iron and brass. Instead of attacking the walls, he diverted the Euphrates River that flowed through the city and used the channel under the walls by which to enter Babylon. He captured the city without difficulty, while Belshazzar, the king, with his courtiers were drinking themselves drunk and desecrating the sacred vessels of the house of the Lord which his father, Nebuchadnezzar, had brought from Jerusalem.

Within the city, Cyrus found the Hebrew prophet, Daniel, who had already interpreted the handwriting on the wall, having informed Belshazzar that he had been "weighed in the balance and found wanting." Having access to the Jewish records, Cyrus learned that the God of Israel had decreed that he was to rebuild Jerusalem. He promptly issued a proclamation to the Jews to return to Jerusalem and for the nations to assist them in rebuilding the city and the temple. This was accomplished exactly seventy years after Jerusalem was destroyed, thus fulfilling Jeremiah's prophecy uttered more than one hundred years before.

The destruction of Babylon is another case in point. When Babylon was in the height of her glory, Isaiah prophesied that it

should be destroyed, "that it should never be inhabited, neither dwell in from generation to generation." It was completely destroyed and inundated by the flood waters of the river. Now, after more than two thousand years, the city that at that time was the greatest under heaven is still a heap of ruins.

The Old Testament is replete with remarkable and almost unbelievable prophecies that were fulfilled to the letter. Only by the revelations of the Lord could the prophets have known what was to occur and only God could fulfill their predictions. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joseph, and others were human beings like their fellows, but they were chosen to represent the Lord and the inspiration of the Almighty directed their utterances and the power of the Lord fulfilled their promises.

Let us refer to one of many predictions in the New Testament. Read the entire twenty-first chapter of St. Luke.

And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

This prophecy involves the fate of Jerusalem, of the temple, and the whole Jewish nation for nineteen hundred years and is still in the course of fulfilment.

In the year 70 A.D., the Roman army encompassed Jerusalem. The faithful disciples, remembering the warning that Jesus had given, fled to the mountains. The city was taken after a long siege in which the inhabitants suffered the extremes of famine, pestilence, and the sword. In addition to those taken captive one and one-half million Jews perished. The country was laid waste and the temple destroyed, not one stone being left upon another, and the population was dispersed into all the nations of the earth—all as predicted.

Today the Jews are a people without a country and are suffering most inhuman treatment under the tyranny of so-called Christian nations. In their dispersion and suffering they have fulfilled prophecy and will in the future further fulfill it by returning to their homeland.

Jerusalem and Babylon, warned by the Lord's servants that they must repent of their wickedness or they would be punished, defiantly refused, and destruction followed. Other cities and nations have become rich, powerful, and wicked, and have passed into oblivion. As we look back at these happenings do we fail to realize that today the world is reaping a harvest of sorrow and destruction because of the iniquity of its inhabitants?

REPENTANCE THE SALVATION OF MANKIND

With the people of the world ignoring the advice of our Heavenly Father and suffering the penalty of wilfulness, will we follow the path of evil when the history of the past teaches us that destruction will eventually overtake us unless we turn to the Lord? Only repentance can save us. Will we repent before it is too late?

We are not landlords. We do not own any part of the earth or

its riches. At most we are only temporary tenants. We leave it all here when we pass on. Naked we came into the world, and naked we depart. This is the Lord's earth, and keeping his commandments is the rent we pay for the blessings of life and all that we will enjoy here and hereafter.

We are living eternal life, and our position hereafter will be the result of our lives here. Every man will be judged according to his works, and he will receive only that degree of glory that he has earned.

It is nearly two thousand years since Jesus Christ our Lord came to earth and gave his life as a ransom for us that through him all might be resurrected from the dead. He was the first fruits of the resurrection. He taught us to love our neighbor as ourself and to do good to all people. His teachings in the New Testament are a most valuable part of the Holy Bible. It was he who said:

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. (John 5:39.)

He knew that a knowledge of the scriptures was *most important*. The nations that have been most influenced by the Bible have accomplished most to bring success and happiness and enlightenment to the world along every line of endeavor because they have profited by the guidance of the God of heaven and earth. We read in Job:

... There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. (Job 32-8.)

In times like these we should seek that inspiration through righteousness. It will come in no other way.

With our sons and daughters pouring out their blood like a river on the battlefields of the world to save us from destruction, surely the most praiseworthy and effective thing we can do to show our appreciation of their sacrifice will be to repent of our sins and set our lives and our homes in order so that we can worthily ask our Heavenly Father to restore peace to the earth and bring our loved ones back to us again.

I am grateful for the companionship of the many intelligent, righteous people who live in this most favored of all lands and in other lands. My life has been enriched by your association, and I thank you for it. I desire most earnestly that we shall all earn and receive an eternal inheritance in the celestial kingdom of our Lord right here upon this earth when we attain to immortality. In this the evening of my mortal life, I leave with you my testimony that I know that the God of our fathers, our God still lives and loves us and desires our happiness and exaltation, and I leave this witness with my love and blessing in the name of Jesus Christ his Beloved Son, our Redeemer. Amen.

President Clark:

We will now resume the regular session of this Conference.

Our concluding speaker will be President David O. McKay of the First Presidency. He will now address us.