

PRESIDENT GEORGE F. RICHARDS

President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My dear brethren, sisters, and friends. I feel this a tremendous responsibility, undertaking to lead in intelligent, profitable thought, a congregation of thousands of intelligent people, present and on the air, members and non-members of the Church, and I sincerely hope that what I shall say will be of some interest and profit.

I suppose that most persons born into this world and living to reach maturity, at some time in their lives, entertain some such thoughts as these: where did I come from, why am I here, where am I going when I leave this sphere of action, and what effect will my life's actions here, have upon my future life?

GOSPEL ANSWERS IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

The gospel of Jesus Christ, as we have received it by divine revelation, makes satisfactory answer to these and many other important questions which arise in the mind from time to time. A like statement cannot be made in truth of any other religious organization. It teaches us that we lived as intelligent beings in the spirit before coming to this earth, that we are the spirit-born sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus Christ, he being the first-born in the spirit, and the only begotten of the Father in the flesh. Coming to this earth is an important part of the plan instituted in the councils of heaven for man's eternal progression toward the goal of our existence, which is an exaltation in the kingdom and presence of the Father and the Son forever.

It is here we are to make every preparation necessary for the life to come. There are certain prescribed conditions that must be complied with. There are principles to be accepted, ordinances to be received, commandments to be kept, laws to be obeyed, sacrifices to be made, service to be rendered, family relationships to be formed, and we are to live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God. We are to love the Lord, our God, with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves. We are even to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us and pray for them which despitefully use us, and persecute us, following the example of Jesus who, when being persecuted to the death, prayed to the Father to forgive his persecutors. This represents the true spirit of Christ which should motivate all our life's actions. We should strive to be in the image of God in principle and in conduct as well as in form. We should be orthodox in our thinking, our understanding, our teachings, and in our living.

We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the ad-

monition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things. (Thirteenth Article of Faith.)

OBEDIENCE BRINGS ORDER AND BEAUTY

The laws of the gospel are the laws of God and are as perfect in their sphere as are the laws governing the universe and all nature. They originated from the same source, and when obeyed by man, they produce order and beauty. Man only of all of God's creations is disobedient to his laws.

The gospel law is that by which our Savior lived, and which made him what he was in life, and what he now is, enthroned in glory at the right hand of God, the Father, in his celestial kingdom.

The same gospel laws are intended to make us like the Savior and to save us with him in our Father's kingdom. He has given us our agency and power to overcome and live the law.

James Allen, author of the book *As A Man Thinketh* expresses therein this religious thought:

As a being of power, intelligence, and love, and the Lord of his own thoughts, man holds the key to every situation, and contains within himself that transforming, regenerating agency, by which he may make himself what he wills.

THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION

My religious education has been and is such, that if I do the things that I know I should do, and leave undone the things I know I should not do, my salvation, the goal of my existence, will be secure. My religion encourages me in my efforts so to do. It has both a stimulating and a restraining influence upon my life, encouraging and stimulating me to good deeds, and restraining me from wrongdoing.

I am a better and happier man because of my religion and its influence upon my life. I would have been a better and happier man than I am, had I lived more in accord with the precepts of my religion, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Someone has said that experience is a dear school but that fools will learn in no other.

This suggests that a wise person will learn and profit by the experience of others.

PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED

We have many object lessons given us in the scriptures from which to profit. In the council in heaven, before the world was, two courses were placed before us; that proposed by the Firstborn, and the other by Lucifer; the one leading unto everlasting life, the

other to everlasting disappointment. We had definitely decided before coming to earth which course to follow.

The Negro race have been forbidden the priesthood, and the higher temple blessings, presumably because of their not having been valiant while in the spirit. It does not pay to be anything but valiant.

Through John the Revelator, the Lord said to the Laodiceans:

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. (Rev. 3:15, 16.)

It is not profitable that we be even lukewarm.

We know the curse which befell Laman and Lemuel and their descendants, the Lamanites, as a result of their disobedience, rebelliousness, and wickedness.

We know the curse that befell the Jews because they rejected their Lord, the Savior. They have been a hiss and a byword among all nations, and that tells but a small part of their unfortunate condition.

The history of the antediluvians furnishes us with an impressive example of the serious consequences of sin and rejecting the gospel.

Noah preached to that people 120 years. They rejected the prophet and his message and became a very wicked people and morally corrupt.

The penalty inflicted upon them was, in part, that of drowning by a flood that covered the whole earth. The death penalty tells but a small part of the story of what befell them on account of their wickedness. They were confined in a spirit prison for, according to the Bible chronology, more than 2,300 years. The nature of this imprisonment is explained by the Prophet Alma as follows:

Now this is the state of the souls of the wicked, yea, in darkness, and a state of awful, fearful looking for the fiery indignation of the wrath of God upon them; thus they remain in this state, as well as the righteous in paradise, until the time of their resurrection. (Alma 40:14.)

GOSPEL PREACHED TO SPIRITS IN PRISON

This period of 2,300 years is between the time of the flood and the death of the Savior, when he went and visited them.

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, where-in few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. (1 Peter 3:18-20.)

How much longer they were imprisoned after Christ's visitation and resurrection we do not know. But it is revealed to us

that should they accept the gospel or the testimony of Jesus, when preached to them, in the spirit, they could attain only to the terrestrial kingdom.

And again, we saw the terrestrial world, and behold and lo, these are they who are of the terrestrial, whose glory differs from that of the church of the Firstborn who have received the fulness of the Father, even as that of the moon differs from the sun in the firmament. Behold, these are they who died without law; also they who are the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the Son visited, and preached the gospel unto them, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh; *Who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received it.* (D. & C. 76:71-74. Italics author's.)

The cities of the plains, Sodom and Gomorrah, with their inhabitants, were destroyed by fire from heaven, because of their wickedness. They also would be shut up in a spirit prison and be denied the blessings of the celestial kingdom, even though they should accept the testimony of Jesus in the spirit.

It is reasonable to believe that other equally disobedient, wicked people, though they may escape the death penalty, would be confined in a spirit prison after their death and be rejected from the celestial kingdom, those of this day, as well as those of former days.

The kingdom of God has been established again on the earth, and the gospel in its fulness has been restored, in fulfilment of ancient prophecies, but people of today are not prepared, in large numbers, to receive it, although the gospel and the kingdom of this dispensation have all the earmarks of the original.

SECOND COMING OF THE SAVIOR

The coming event of great importance, toward which the attention of the world is directed by the preaching of the gospel, is the second and glorious coming of our Lord and Savior, for whose coming all good Christians are anxiously awaiting, for at that day the righteous dead shall come forth, and the righteous living shall be changed or quickened, and together they will be caught up to meet the Savior and his holy angels in the clouds of heaven. Satan will be bound for one thousand years, and peace shall prevail in the earth.

Signs of the Lord's coming are seen in the wars and rumors of wars, famine, pestilence, the seas heaving themselves beyond their bounds, infidelity, apostasy, and wickedness of every conceivable character.

They have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinances, and broken the everlasting covenant, and sin and wickedness prevail throughout the earth.

There are two great unseen powers operating upon the minds and hearts of the children of men, today, the power of God and the power of Lucifer, or Satan, each striving for the souls of men;

the one to save, and the other to destroy. In the language of the scripture: Choose ye this day whom ye will serve. Lest we be taken off guard, and be found unwittingly serving the wrong master, let us be reminded that

. . . all things which are good cometh of God; and that which is evil cometh of the devil; . . . (Moroni 7:12.)

TESTIMONY

I bear unto you, my brethren, sisters, and friends, a faithful and sincere testimony that I do know that this, the work in which we as Latter-day Saints are engaged, is the work of God, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, which had its inception in the councils of heaven before the world was. In it is the power of God unto salvation and eternal life.

We invite all men to come unto God and be saved with him in his kingdom, by obedience unto the laws and ordinances of the gospel, made effective for man's salvation through the atonement wrought out by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. May his blessings attend you all, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

ELDER BRUCE R. McCONKIE

Of the First Council of the Seventy

This Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is literally the kingdom of God on earth. I believe that every man who has presided over it as a prophet-president has been the Lord's anointed and has held the keys of the kingdom, and that these keys are the keys of salvation for all people. And I believe that the Lord has decreed for this dispensation that the gospel is here to remain until Christ comes, and of course from then forever after. This is a day when the kingdom will never be given to another people, but when it will remain with the Saints; and everyone who will come to Christ and live his laws will receive peace and joy and comfort in this life and a certain hope of eternal life in the world to come.

VISION GIVEN TO JOSEPH SMITH

When Joseph Smith went into the Sacred Grove to pray in the spring of 1820, having been exercised by religious anxiety and turmoil, it was to ask which of all the churches was right and which one he should join. There then appeared to him two glorified, exalted, resurrected beings—God the Eternal Father and Jesus Christ his Son—who, in answer to Joseph's question, told him that he should join none of them, for they were all wrong; that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that;