

May God help us so to live and labor and teach that this testimony may ever live in the hearts of our boys and our girls, the youth of Zion, I humbly pray, in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER BRUCE R. McCONKIE

Of the First Council of the Seventy

This is a glorious privilege—to speak in a session of the general conference of the Church. I am grateful for it.

I know that the work you and I are engaged in is true. Bishop Richards has spoken of getting a testimony of this work by revelation from the Holy Ghost. I, for one, as an elder in this kingdom, know that the work is true. I know just as well as I know anything in this world, that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God; that Joseph Smith, a choice seer, was the instrument in his hands in our day, of giving us the laws and ordinances of salvation; and that the keys of salvation have remained with the Church from the days of Joseph Smith to the present moment.

SALVATION FOR THE DEAD

One of the doctrines of this kingdom, in which there is great comfort for the Saints, is that of salvation for the dead. We know that in the mercy of God our worthy ancestors may become joint heirs with us of the riches of eternity—and this because our God is no respecter of persons. Joseph Smith said that the greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us—speaking to the Latter-day Saints of their individual responsibility—to seek after our dead. We know that we, without them, cannot be made perfect; neither can they, without us.

But at the same time, in this glorious doctrine of salvation for the dead, there is a warning to the Latter-day Saints. This warning arises because the doctrine is limited to those who die without a knowledge of the gospel. It has no application to us. As far as I am concerned, as far as you are concerned, as far as all the people are concerned who have a knowledge of the gospel, now is the time and the day of our salvation.

No people in all the world have been blessed as we have been blessed. We have living oracles at the head; we have prophets and apostles to guide us, to give us the mind and will of the Lord. We have the opportunity to walk in the light of latter-day revelation. And, accordingly, we have the responsibility to accept that light and walk as God would have us walk if we would reap the glories and honors of eternity.

PROPHET'S VISION OF CELESTIAL KINGDOM

Shortly before the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in 1836, there was a period when the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the

people in great abundance, particularly upon the leaders. On the twenty-first of January 1836, Joseph Smith and many of the leading brethren were assembled in the Kirtland Temple. In the Prophet's language, this took place:

The heavens were opened upon us, and I beheld the celestial kingdom of God, and the glory thereof, whether in the body or out I cannot tell. I saw the transcendent beauty of the gate through which the heirs of that kingdom will enter, which was like unto circling flames of fire; also the blazing throne of God, whereon was seated the Father and the Son. I saw the beautiful streets of that kingdom, which had the appearance of being paved with gold. I saw Fathers Adam and Abraham and my father and mother, my brother, Alvin, that has long since slept, and marvelled how it was that he had obtained an inheritance in that kingdom, seeing that he had departed this life before the Lord had set His hand to gather Israel the second time, and had not been baptized for the remission of sins. (D. H. C. 2:380.)

Alvin had died on November 19, 1824, five and one-half years before the Lord had organized, through the Prophet, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He had not been baptized. Baptism is the gate to the celestial kingdom of God. It is impossible to enter that kingdom unless one is born of water and of the spirit.

At the time this vision was given, the Prophet's father, among others, was with him in the Kirtland Temple. Thus it is a vision of what was to be in the future. Joseph continues to write:

Thus came the voice of the Lord unto me, saying—

All who have died without a knowledge of this Gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God; also all that shall die henceforth without a knowledge of it, who would have received it with all their hearts, shall be heirs of that kingdom, for I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts. (D.H.C. 2:380; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 107.)

There is no promise—that I know anything about—that those who reject the gospel in this life will be heirs of the celestial kingdom in the world to come.

When the Prophet wrote his epistle on the subject of baptism for the dead, he said that it was

... for the salvation of the dead who should die without a knowledge of the gospel. (D. & C. 128:5.)

NOW IS THE DAY OF OUR SALVATION

To me, and to you, and to everyone who has a fair and a just and an equitable opportunity to accept the truth in this life, the law, in my judgment, is that given by Amulek. He said:

... now is the time and day of your salvation; and therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, ... immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you.

For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold, the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.

... do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold,

if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed. (Alma 34:31-33.)

The Prophet Mormon, speaking as he was moved upon by the Holy Ghost, pronounced this curse upon those who, having opportunity to accept the laws of salvation in this life, reject them:

... be unto him that will not hearken unto the words of Jesus, and also to them whom he hath chosen and sent among them; for whoso receiveth not the words of Jesus and the words of those whom he hath sent receiveth not him; and therefore he will not receive them at the last day;

And it would be better for them if they had not been born. (III Nephi 28: 34-35.)

Jacob, the brother of Nephi, adds this testimony:

... wo unto him that has the law given, yea, that has all the commandments of God, like unto us, and that transgresseth them, and that wasteth the days of his probation, for awful is his state! (II Nephi 9:27.)

These revealed principles are but specific applications of the eternal law that:

... of him unto whom much is given much is required; and he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation. (D. & C. 82: 3.)

When the Resurrected Lord appeared to the Nephites, he preached to them, in purity and in perfection, his everlasting gospel. He gave them, among other things, the Sermon on the Mount, substantially the same as he had given it to the Jews, as is recorded in the New Testament. But one of the additions he made was this:

... come unto me and be ye saved; for verily I say unto you, that except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this time, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. (III Nephi 12: 20.)

THE HEIRS OF SALVATION

These revelations divide the heirs of salvation into two classes: first, those who have opportunity to accept and live the gospel in this life—this means all of the Latter-day Saints and all others who have a sufficient witness of Christ borne to them—all of them are under obligation to accept the truth here and now, to hearken to the counsels of the living oracles, and to live according to the best light and knowledge that God gives them. If they do this they work out their salvation.

The other class of people who will be heirs of the celestial kingdom are those who would have accepted the gospel with all their hearts, had they had opportunity to accept it here. For them, the ordinances of salvation will be performed and they will be heirs of the kingdom, and with the righteous and faithful of this life, will go into our Father's kingdom and have eternal rest.

We can get, here and now, in this life, that peace of Christ—the peace which passeth understanding of which President Ivins has

spoken—by obeying the laws and ordinances of the gospel. Then if we press forward and continue throughout life to keep the commandments, we can have that same peace and that same rest in eternity.

THE TERRESTRIAL WORLD

Now the question naturally arises, in the light of these principles and doctrines, "What happens to those who have an opportunity to accept the truth in this life, but who fail or neglect to do it, and who hereafter accept it in the spirit world?" The Lord has given us answer by revelation. Speaking of the terrestrial world, he said: These are:

. . . 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. 76:73-74.)

Well, to me and to you, and to those to whom our missionaries go, this is a great warning. It is a warning that now is the time for us to keep the commandments of God. I do not know any reason for believing that a man who has belonged to this Church, and has then rebelled against the truth, who has forsaken it and gone his own wilful way, will have another chance to be an heir to that kingdom. Christ's law, as it fell from his own lips, is that,

. . . No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. (Luke 9:62.)

I do not sit in judgment. Judgment is the Lord's and he will repay. But at the same time since these doctrines have come to us in such great plainness in this day, we are bound to know them, to live in accordance with them—and failing such, we will merit the penalty which a just God has decreed for our disobedience, for our sinning against the light.

IMPORTANCE OF MORTALITY

We lived in the pre-existent world. We walked by sight. We gained knowledge and intelligence, and we obeyed in a greater or less degree. Then the Lord put us down here in mortality, drew a curtain over our remembrance of pre-existence, and ordained that while here we should be tried and tested, that we would undergo a final examination for all the life we had lived in that pre-mortal world. He ordained, at the same time, that this mortal probation would be an entrance examination into the kingdoms and glories and worlds that are prepared in eternity.

As far as you and I are concerned, at this time, this life is the most important part of all eternity. We have the light and knowledge and revelations of heaven. This life is the time for us to prepare to meet God, to keep the commandments of God, to hearken to the counsels of the living oracles and to press forward in righteousness.

The plan of salvation is to find the truth; and the Latter-day

Saints have found it. It is to accept the truth; and we have accepted it in the waters of baptism by covenant, a covenant that we will keep the commandments of God. The remaining step is to endure to the end, in righteousness and in faithfulness. Nephi said that repentance and baptism are the gate to salvation, and that having entered in by the gate, men are then in the straight and narrow path which leads to eternal life. We Latter-day Saints have entered in by the gate. We are now on the path. It remains for us to press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. It remains for us to press forward, feasting upon the words of Christ, and endure to the end, which if we do, we will gain eternal life.

LOVE LIGHTENS OUR COURSE

I do not know that there is anyone among us, unless he has sinned away the opportunity of repentance, who is not capable of starting from this point and going forward in righteousness and truth and gaining the celestial kingdom of heaven. The gospel course is either hard or easy, depending upon whether we love the Lord. If we do not love the Lord it may seem hard and the course may seem rugged. If we love the Lord and desire to keep his commandments, then his yoke is easy, and his burden is light. We can have peace and joy and satisfaction and solace and rest here and now in this life. We can have the guidance of the Holy Ghost, we can make our calling and election sure for eternity on the one premise of keeping the commandments of God.

Now

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. (Ecc. 12:13.)

In the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER HAROLD B. LEE

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Today as always, on these occasions, I seek interest in your silent prayers and for the sustaining power of my Heavenly Father.

PIONEER HERITAGE

Several weeks ago there appeared in our local newspaper, an account of an interview with an elderly statesman who seems to wield great influence today in American politics. This elderly statesman, in explaining the reason for his determination and zeal told of an interview, or rather a statement his own father—now long since dead—had made to his four sons just before he died. This is what the father said: