

blessings and his peace be with us, as we go through this conference, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

It is written that faith is the first principle of revealed religion, the foundation of all righteousness. (See D. & C. Lectures on Faith 1:1.) This being true, all our righteousness is due to faith, and it follows that our unrighteousness is due to a lack of faith. We desire in preaching the gospel to the Saints and strangers alike to establish as far as possible faith in the minds and the hearts of people that they may bring forth righteousness, for righteousness is what makes for salvation in the kingdom of God, and we are all candidates for salvation.

EVIDENCES OF GOD'S EXISTENCE

In my remarks today, I desire to speak of some of the evidences of the divine, personal, and glorified existence of God, the Eternal Father, and of his Son, Jesus Christ, a knowledge of whom I regard as the world's greatest need; also to give evidence of the fact that Joseph Smith was a divinely inspired prophet of God, that he was an instrument in the hands of God in the restoration of the everlasting gospel, and the establishment of the Church and kingdom of God on earth in this, the gospel Dispensation of the Fulness of Times.

JOSEPH SMITH'S FIRST VISION

On a beautiful spring morning in the year 1820, a fourteen-year-old boy of Manchester, New York, being considerably exercised over religion, and believing the scripture which reads:

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 (James 1:5)

retired into a grove of trees nearby to pray. He tells his own story as follows:

After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I knelt down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction.

But, exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction—not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual

being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being—just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name, and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*

My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right—and which I should join.

I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: "they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof."

He again forbade me to join with any of them. . . . (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith 2:15-20.)

It is of supreme importance that the story told by this boy Joseph Smith, and the evidence of its truth, be carefully and prayerfully considered, for upon the truth or falsity of his story, Mormonism, so-called, must stand or fall.

TRUTH CONCERNING GOD REVEALED

In this eventful experience there was revealed to the boy Joseph, and through him, to the world, two exceedingly important truths. First, that God the Eternal Father and his Son Jesus Christ are separate, living personages, glorified and exalted; and second, that all the religious creeds were wrong.

Whatever Joseph's views or understanding pertaining to the personality of God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ may have been, he now had a perfect knowledge on that point. He had not before entertained the thought that all the creeds or denominations might be wrong, but on these two points his mind was now clear and at ease.

The debris of a decayed religion having now been removed, room is made in the world for the establishment of the true religion of the Master. It later developed that this boy, Joseph Smith, was raised up of the Lord to be the mighty prophet of the last days, an instrument in the hands of God in the restoration of the everlasting gospel, and in the establishment of his Church and kingdom anew upon the earth, as described by Daniel the prophet in his interpretation of the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar.

EVIL POWER OF SATAN

As important evidence that Joseph's story is true, when he knelt down to pray, he was seized upon by an evil power which

bound his tongue, so that he could not speak. Such an attack by Satan might well have been expected.

If his story had not included his experience with the evil power, at that psychological moment, it would have lacked vital evidence of its truth. Satan, who is the enemy of God and of man, has from the beginning thus operated in an effort to defeat the purpose of God whose purpose is the saving of the souls of men.

When Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden, straightway came Satan tempting them, with the same evil intent. After the personal visitation of God to his servant Moses, as recorded in the first chapter of the Book of Moses, Satan came tempting him, saying:

Moses, son of man, worship^e me . . . (Moses 1:12)

a presumption of which only Satan could be capable.

When the Savior had fasted forty days and nights and was an hungered, Satan came tempting him, saying:

. . . If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. (Luke 4:3.)

In what respect was the boy, Joseph Smith, so different from other fourteen-year-old boys of his time that Satan should seek his destruction; and why mention him in connection with Adam and Eve, Moses, and Jesus as objects of Satan's attack? Let us see if we can find the explanation in the following scripture:

Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these 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. (Abraham 3:22-23.)

JOSEPH SMITH CHOSEN FOR HIS WORK

Joseph Smith was also one of those noble spirits chosen before he was born. Had any number of boys fourteen years of age, other than Joseph Smith, gone into the woods to pray for light and spiritual guidance, not one of them would have had the vision given to the boy Joseph. He was chosen and ordained for the special work of restoration, and this vision of the Father and the Son was the first step in his life's ministry. No doubt Satan knew of Joseph's calling, and that if he did not succeed in destroying him at this time, he would not be able to do so thereafter; hence the vigorous assault made upon the boy's life.

Again, by the testimony of the eleven living witnesses to the Book of Mormon, the truth of Joseph's story is established, for had his story been untrue, he would have been a great imposter

and as such, God would not have used him in bringing forth the Book of Mormon, which contains a fulness of the gospel, as taught by Jesus Christ to the ancient inhabitants of this American continent, which fact is logically established by eleven living witnesses.

NEED OF NEW REVELATION

The need of this new revelation of God today, as in 1820, is apparent from statements such as follows:

In a radio address Elder Thomas C. Romney related a conversation with a professor in a great educational institution in which the professor said to Elder Romney:

Your conception of God, to me, is most absurd. I cannot conceive of a group of people who claim to keep abreast of the times in science, art, and religion, still clinging to the antiquated doctrine that God is in the form of a man.

On page 15 of Shorter Catechism, a textbook of the Presbyterian Church, is found the following:

We must be content to call Father, Son, and Holy Ghost persons; but while we do so, we must always remember that they are utterly unlike any personalities we have ever known. In modern philosophical usage, the term *person* means a separate and distinct rational individual. But the personality of God is not a numerical or essential trinity of three beings, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Another reference showing the need for a new revelation from God is the following:

The Bishop of Liverpool performed the consecration ceremony at Holy Trinity Church, Southport, yesterday, October 11, 1911. In his sermon he said one of the great needs of the Christian Church was power. Religion today was wearing silver slippers and moving in high places, and yet he ventured to think there was a strange want of power about the Church of God, not only in their church, but about every other branch. . . . What was the cause of the strange paralysis that had befallen the church? He believed that the church needed today a rediscovery of God; he believed the church was weak today because God was so distant, so unreal, so dimly seen. Today they saw the results of that dim vision of the distant God.

The first article of religion in the Church of England Prayer book reads as follows:

There is one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, visible and invisible, and in the unity of this godhead, there are three personages of one substance, power, and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

PERSONALITY OF GOD

There are some men of considerable eminence who are not bound by religious creeds, who are frank in their professions of belief in the personality of God, and their views should be

weighed in this connection as in opposition to the views of those who do not believe in a personal God. For example:

In a discourse by President Brigham H. Roberts, delivered in this Tabernacle March 15, 1914, he quotes a statement made by William H. Gladstone, a great English statesman, and at one time prime minister of Great Britain, in response to the question put to him as to what he regarded as the world's greatest need; and his answer to that question in substance was that the world's greatest need was to hold more firmly to the conception of God as a personality, to whom man was accountable for his deeds. Said he:

I mean a living faith in a personal God. After sixty years of public life, I hold more strongly than ever to the conviction, deepened and strengthened by long experience, of the reality, and the nearness, and the personality of God.

Henry Ward Beecher, in his book entitled, *Lectures on Preaching*, page 129, says:

I am compelled to say that I must form an ideal of God, through his Son Jesus Christ. Christ is indispensable to me. My nature needs to fashion the thought of God, though I know him to be a spirit, into something that will nearly or remotely represent that which I know. I hold before my eyes a glorified form, therefore, but after all this glory, whatever may be the nimbus and the effulgence round about it, it is to me a glorified form of a glorified man.

The first Article of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints reads as follows:

We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in his Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.

What we believe concerning these members of the Godhead is set forth in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 130:22, as follows:

The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. . . .

These latter quotations and interpretations are in complete harmony with Joseph Smith's vision and with the teachings of the Bible, both the Old and the New Testament, and cannot be successfully controverted. They are truths which all men must accept who would be saved in the kingdom of God; and to which I bear testimony, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The *Relief Society Singing Mothers* and the congregation joined in singing the hymn: "We Thank Thee, O God, For a Prophet."