

here in these conferences and in our quarterly conferences and the spirit that we can have in our homes if we will say our prayers daily. May the Lord bless us to this end, I humbly pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

ELDER MILTON R. HUNTER

Of the First Council of the Seventy

It is indeed a sobering experience, my brethren and sisters, to occupy this position and to look into the faces of this vast multitude of Latter-day Saints who have come here to worship the Lord. I humbly trust and pray that the Spirit of the Lord will attend me in what I say this morning.

I, like the other brethren who have spoken, have a testimony of this great work. I appreciate the privilege I have of being a member of the Church of Jesus Christ. It is my one great desire in life to serve the Lord to the best of my ability and always to do what he wants me to do.

IMMORTALITY OF MAN

Deep in the heart of practically every person who has lived in this world, God has implanted a hope—yes, more than that—even a strong desire, that he will live on after death. The immortality of man is a universal concept. The study of ancient religions reveals the fact that any religion that was popular with its devotees and became a religion of prominence attained that popularity and prominence as a result of assuring its members that following their sojourn on this earth they would experience a happy, glorious, and blessed immortality. The same fact holds true today.

When Father Adam and Eve were upon this earth, through his Only Begotten Son, God revealed to them the gospel of Jesus Christ; and as one of the most important doctrines in that gospel he gave them the assurance that if they and their posterity would live in accordance with all the teachings, doctrine, and ordinances revealed to them that some day they would be able to come back into his presence. There they would not only experience immortality but they would also enjoy the great blessing of eternal life.

Throughout the various ages when God has revealed gospel principles to his holy prophets, he has always given them that one great idea that men will live on throughout the eternities.

A little over a hundred years ago when the gospel plan of salvation was being restored to the Prophet Joseph Smith in our dispensation, the various Christian denominations held the concept that men would live on after death, and yet their understanding of the unseen world was very hazy and vague. They had little, if any, information

regarding our pre-mortal life, and their post-mortal life concepts were very erroneous in many respects. It became necessary, therefore, for our Father in heaven to reveal again to earth an abundance of knowledge relative to the immortality of man and point out the pathway to follow in order to gain eternal life. As a result of God's concern over his children, the Prophet Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon. It contains much doctrine pertaining especially to post-mortal life. He also received the wonderful revelations recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants. Section seventy-six is the greatest revelation regarding post-mortal life to be found recorded in any book in the world. Joseph received the Pearl of Great Price in which we find much information on the council of the gods and our pre-mortal existence.

RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

We not only have the teachings of the prophets and revelation regarding the immortality of man, but we have a lot of absolute evidence. The greatest of all evidence that you and I are immortal, that we will live on after we leave this life, is the fact that Jesus Christ, following his crucifixion, rose from the grave. He appeared to many people in and around Jerusalem, thereby establishing the fact that he was immortal and extending the promise to humanity that as he had risen from the grave so would all men.

We read in the book of Matthew that at the time of the Savior's resurrection the graves of saints who had lived godly lives while in mortality were opened, and they appeared to many people in and around Jerusalem. These saints could have been such characters as Father Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Noah, and the other holy prophets and their wives who belonged to "the Church of the Firstborn."

Following his resurrection, Jesus Christ also appeared to the Nephites who lived in this land. On one of those occasions he told them to bring their records to him. As he read that record, he asked them if Samuel the Lamanite had not prophesied that when Christ was resurrected the graves of the ancient saints would be opened and that they would appear to these Nephite people. He was informed that such had been the prophecies and that those prophecies have been fulfilled. Thereupon he instructed the Nephite historian to write that great prophecy and its fulfilment in their records in order that you and I in the latter days might know for a surety that we would live on after death; that we are immortal beings as well as mortal.

LATTER-DAY TESTIMONY

Over one hundred years ago Jesus Christ appeared to Joseph Smith on several occasions. Christ was a resurrected, glorified

celestialized God when he made those appearances. Interspersed among those visitations, other beings who had lived upon this earth in ancient days appeared to the Prophet Joseph. Such persons as the Angel Moroni, Peter, James, and John, John the Baptist, Moses, Elias, Elijah, Michael, Raphael, and others visited Joseph Smith. Each appearance, of course, added testimony upon testimony regarding the immortality of man and the eternal life that the righteous ones who live upon this earth will eventually attain.

In the doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints we have a rather comprehensive understanding of our pre-mortal life. We are taught that you and I are brothers and sisters; in fact, all the men, women, and children who have ever come into this world are brothers and sisters, and they were all sons and daughters of God the Eternal Father and our Eternal Mother in that celestial spirit realm before we came into mortality. We are taught that we were born into that spirit realm as babies, and that we grew to maturity there, undergoing the various experiences which were there for us prior to our coming to mortality. Also through revelation we have learned that the gods held a council preparatory to the peopling of this earth in which the plans for mortality were discussed and proclaimed.

OUR DESTINATION

Probably of all the human beings who have lived upon this earth, at least a vast majority of them have asked this question of themselves: "Where do we go when we die?" I would say to all Latter-day Saints on this occasion that the place to which you and I go when we die will be determined, to a great extent, upon how we live while we are here—I mean our ultimate destination, the goal that we are striving for. We have the true plan of salvation, the gospel of Jesus Christ, with all the ordinances of the gospel, all the teachings, including the Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God. All of these things which are necessary to bring us back into the presence of God and exalt us in celestial glory are ours. We know, therefore, what will be our destination as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints if we will live by every word that comes from the mouth of God. On the other hand, with all the power, priesthood, ordinances, doctrines, opportunities, and blessings that are ours, we also know that if we sin sufficiently, we have the power to condemn ourselves to the greatest of depths, even to cast our souls down to hell. The prophets have proclaimed that where much is given much is required at our hands.

To the Latter-day Saints death is not such a serious thing. It doesn't make a lot of difference how long we live in this world. The thing which is of vital importance, however, to you and me is how we live. Are we prepared to meet the Eternal Father and his Only Begotten Son? If death should come upon us any minute, are we pre-

pared to go into the other world and eventually come into the celestial kingdom of God? That should be your goal and that should be my goal. We should live such a clean and pure life each day, rendering obedience to all the principles and ordinances of the gospel to such an extent that we would be ready to die whenever death comes upon us.

SPIRIT WORLD

Every person who dies will go into a world known as the spirit world. Those who have lived righteous lives here in mortality will find there a paradise, a heaven, a place of peace, of joy, of opportunities, of progression. On the other hand, those who have lived wicked lives will find themselves in the spirit world somewhat as if they were in prison. In fact, the prophets speak of that world as a prison. We read in Second Peter that at the time the Savior's body lay in the tomb, his spirit went to the spirit world and opened the doors of the gospel to those who were drowned in the flood at Noah's time. Those people had been detained from hearing the gospel, being in prison during that long period of time of more than two thousand years.

Some people that I have talked to have the concept that when they die that suddenly, their sins will all be washed away, and they will become white and glorious, pure and clean, in somewhat of an automatic or miraculous way. Such is not the case. According to the ancient prophets, especially the Book of Mormon, sustained by modern revelation, when we die, if we are filthy, we are filthy still. The fact that we die doesn't change us one iota. You and I are dual personages, possessing a spirit body which dwells in a physical body. Death is the separation of that spiritual body from the physical body. All of our good deeds, our bad deeds; the knowledge we have attained; our habits, our evil and good inclinations, are resident in the spirit. The spirit personage contains the personality, or, in other words, the spirit is the real individual. Having an understanding of this doctrine, therefore, we know that when we die we take with us to the other world exactly what we have made of ourselves while living in mortality. There is only one way that I know whereby you and I can purify ourselves, and that one way is through repentance. The things that we should repent of here in mortality will probably be easier to repent of now instead of putting them off until we go to the other world and have to overcome those handicaps at that time; and so I would say, "today is the day to prepare to meet God. Permit me to quote the words of an ancient Nephite prophet on that subject:

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. . . . if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed. (Book of Mormon, Alma 34:32-33.)

A PROBATIONARY STATE

Every person after he or she leaves this life will stay in the spirit world a certain length of time in order to continue to prepare himself to come into the presence of God. In that spirit world there is a lot of activity. The gospel of Jesus Christ is being taught to those who have not received the plan of salvation here in mortality, and especially to those who previously have not had opportunity. When those people in the spirit world have received the gospel, the temple work that mortals do for them consummates the work for their acceptance of Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation there in the spirit world. The spirit world, then, is another probationary state in order that the sons and daughters of God who will might prepare themselves to meet him.

UNIVERSAL RESURRECTION

Following our sojourn in the spirit world comes the resurrection. There will be a universal resurrection of every man, woman, and child. Just as we all die, so must we all rise from the grave. Amulek declared:

. . . I say unto you that this mortal body is raised to an immortal body, that is from death, even from the first death unto life, that they can die no more; their spirits uniting with their bodies, never to be divided; thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal, that they can no more see corruption. (*Ibid.* 11:45.)

Jesus Christ came into the world and died for the sins of the world. He broke the bands of death and was resurrected, being the first fruits of the resurrection. He set into operation the law of resurrection and thereby gave as a free gift to every man, woman, and child, resurrection, or, in other words, immortality. Thus we will all, the wicked as well as the righteous, enjoy immortality.

THE GREAT JUDGMENT

Following the resurrection comes the great judgment. Every person who has lived and shall live in this world—every man, woman, and child—shall stand before the judgment seat of God to answer for the life he or she lived here in mortality, and also to answer for the life lived in the spirit world.

Alma, that great Nephite prophet, was preaching this doctrine one day to his people. He explained to them that every man, woman, and child, "both bond and free, . . . both the wicked and the righteous," would be resurrected and required to stand before the judgment seat of God. There they would be held accountable for the lives they lived while in mortality, for every act they committed, yea for every word they spoke, and for every thought that they thought.

You and I are responsible beings, accountable for the things that we think. To quote:

For our words will condemn us, yea, all our works will condemn us; we shall not be found spotless; and our thoughts will condemn us. (*Ibid.* 12:14.)

Alma also explained on that occasion that God would divide the people into two groups. He would look upon the members of one group and smile. They are the righteous. He would proclaim to them that they could enter into his presence. Great would be their joy. And then he would look upon those who composed the other group, and they should be so ashamed because of the lives they had lived in mortality that they would cry to the mountains to come down and hide them from the presence of God. But such would not be the case. They would have to stay in his presence while being judged, and every knee would bow and every tongue would confess that he was the Christ; that his judgments were true and just. And then they would hear the voice of God tell them to depart from him because of the sinful lives that they had lived. This is the group spoken of in the scripture, declaring that they would weep and wail and gnash their teeth because they had lost the great blessing of celestial and eternal life.

THREE DEGREES OF GLORY

Following the judgment, according to modern revelation, a vast majority of the inhabitants of this earth will be assigned to one or another of three kingdoms, worlds, or degrees of glory. These are termed the telestial, the terrestrial, and the celestial. The law by which we are quickened at the time of resurrection will determine the world to which we shall be assigned. Let us hear the word of the Lord on that subject:

For notwithstanding they die, they also shall rise again, a spiritual body.

They who are of a celestial spirit shall receive the same body which was a natural body; even ye shall receive your bodies, and your glory shall be that glory by which your bodies are quickened.

Ye who are quickened by a portion of the celestial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness.

And they who are quickened by a portion of the terrestrial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness.

And also they who are quickened by a portion of the telestial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness.

And they who remain shall also be quickened; nevertheless, they shall return again to their own place, to enjoy that which they are willing to receive, because they were not willing to enjoy that which they might have received. (D. & C. 88:27-32.)

CELESTIAL GLORY

To the Latter-day Saints our interests lie in the celestial glory. In fact, we don't have much interest in the other two degrees because

we are assured through revelation that those who go to the celestial degree of glory and receive exaltation are members of the Church of the Firstborn who have lived by every word that has come from the mouth of God, being humble, and faithful in all of their activities here in life. We are heirs, therefore, of celestial glory. The gateway into celestial glory is faith, repentance, baptism, and confirmation; and then, of course, as the Saints enter the kingdom of God by compliance with the foregoing requirements, they make their calling and election sure by rendering obedience to all the ordinances and doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ from day to day throughout the entire course of this mortal life. These are they who shall dwell in the presence of God.

EXALTATION

In the celestial degree of glory there are three kingdoms or three degrees. The highest of these constitutes those who receive exaltation or eternal life. They are they who live the law of the priesthood or the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, known as celestial marriage. The Latter-day Saints, as well as the people throughout the various ages of the world who have belonged to the true Church of Jesus Christ, who have been married by the power of the priesthood and have obeyed all the priesthood covenants that they have entered into, having lived in accordance with all the teachings of the gospel, these are they who shall be exalted in the celestial realm. The Lord has given his law on this doctrine as follows:

. . . verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; [and if they commit no sin to break that seal]; . . . they shall pass by the angels and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

Then shall they be gods. (*Ibid.*, 132:19-20.)

The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that this continuation of "the seeds" forever and ever, meant the power of procreation; in other words, the power to beget spirit children on the same principle as we were born to our Heavenly Parents, God the Eternal Father and our Eternal Mother. Therefore, a man cannot receive the highest exaltation without a woman, his wife, nor can a woman be exalted without her husband. That is the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the plan of salvation. Eternal life is the greatest gift that God has in store for those who love him and keep his commandments, and you and I know how it can be attained.

In the celestial degree of glory there are two other divisions. They are occupied by angels of God. These angels are the ones

who did not abide by the law of celestial marriage; however; they accepted Christ and lived good lives, but they did not accept all the gospel ordinances. This is the word of the Lord on that subject:

For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever. (*Ibid.*, 132:17.)

ETERNAL LIFE

My brethren and sisters, where do we go when we die? As Latter-day Saints we hope some day to go not only to the celestial degree of glory but also to receive exaltation in his kingdom, i.e., to receive eternal life. If we accept all the ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ and obey all of the teachings of the gospel; if we abide by the law of celestial marriage; if we pay our tithes and offerings to the Lord; if we are clean and pure in thought and habit, thereby keeping our bodies as temples of God, clean and pure as he wants us to do; if we live virtuously and in every way serve him, then at the great judgment day we will hear the voice of God say to us, words to this effect: "Well done, my beloved servants. You were faithful in the few, small things that I gave you to do in mortality, you may, therefore, now come into my presence." And to continue to paraphrase the Doctrine and Covenants, "Then shall they pass by the angels and gods who are stationed there to their exaltation, and they shall become priests and kings to the Most High God. They shall become as he is." In other words, they shall have eternal life. Then shall the oath and covenant of the priesthood be brought into effect which you and I have made, each of us who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood. All that God has will be ours. He will share with us.

May this be the lot of the Latter-day Saints, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President J. Reuben Clark, Jr.:

I think the time is far spent. We will change the order and will ask the choir now and the congregation to sing "O, Say What is Truth?" Elder J. Spencer Cornwall will conduct the singing.

Singing by the choir and congregation, "O, Say What is Truth?"

ELDER CLIFFORD E. YOUNG

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

I cannot tell you how grateful I feel this morning for the privilege of being here and associating with you, my brethren and sisters, in this great conference.